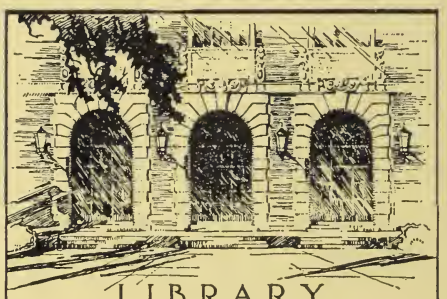

FORTY DAYS

IN

THE DESERT.

ON THE

TRACK OF THE ISRAELITES.

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IN THE DESERT,

ON

The Track of the Israelites;

OR,

A JOURNEY FROM CAIRO,

BY WADY FEIRAN, TO MOUNT SINAI AND PETRA.

By the Author of

"WALKS ABOUT JERUSALEM."

[William Henry Bartlett]

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PREFACE.

He who has drank of the Nile water, it is said, is always restless till he has tasted it again; and this may be taken as a figure of the strange longing which at times torments an old oriental traveller, to seek for fresh adventures among lands through which he often wandered at the time in peril and privation; for now these drawbacks are either wholly forgotten, or, by the alchemy of memory, are converted into sources of even pleasurable recollection. The East must ever be the land of the imagination, being as it is the seat of early fable and history, the birth-place of art, science, and poetry; the cradle of our religion; and there also, to add to its interest, still survive unchanged, after the lapse of ages, manners, feelings, and usages, such as are described in our very earliest records. What a halo seems to hang over the shores of the Mediterranean! such as invests no other place on earth. The empires, whose revolutions fill the stirring page of history, from its dawning light down to modern times, are all around: some, as Tyre and Carthage, having indeed utterly perished; but others, like Egypt, leaving behind a glorious legacy of monumental records. Where can we wander in this beautiful sea without being reminded of the great and good of past ages?—our footsteps are ever in the track of sages and poets, of prophets and apostles, or of Him who is greater than all. Who is there but has longed to witness these hallowed scenes as he has no other?—and if fortune has denied this wish, turns not with peculiar interest to the endless books of tourists, which may afford him, each in its own way, some phase of that Eastern world, some figure or impression of its climate or scenery, or of the mode

of travel? It is strong imagination, indeed, which fills up the poor verbal pictures of travellers, and gives them a charm which otherwise they could not possess. And what a little world of treasured memories has one who has visited the East! he sees again his caravan, all wild and gay, clambering the mountain side, remembers his siesta by the way-side fountain, or that indescribable moment when some splendid city, with all its histories, rose suddenly upon his visio —he wanders again among its strange, bright crowds; or calls to mind when he stood on the summit of some hoary poetic mountain, looking over half a world of plains and valleys, memorable in ancient story, or reclines again in the shade of the fallen columns of some ruined temple, in the midst of his wild conductors. Circumstances favoured the wish of the writer to pay a fourth, and, in all probability, a farewell visit to the East; and to add to recollections of Jerusalem and Palestine, those also of the earliest ground hallowed by biblical history —the Desert "of the wandering," as it is called to this day, with all its localities preserved intact. This journey he was enabled to accomplish; and can only regret his inability adequately to convey the indelible impressions which it has left behind. The special objects which may, perhaps, excuse the addition of the present volume on the subject to the multitude which have already appeared are—the desire to give somewhat more of distinctness to the route of the Israelites than is to be found in the work of Laborde; to depict, though but imperfectly, the valley of Feiran, and the neighbouring mountain of the Serbal, not only the most romantic spot in the Arabian peninsula, but confidently pronounced by no less a *savant* than Dr. Lepsius to be the real Sinai; as also to give a picture of Petra, that extraordinary rock-hewn capital of Edom, which, by its singular wildness, even yet seems, beyond any other place, to thrill the imagination, and waken the love of adventure.

FORTY DAYS

IN

THE DESERT.

The preparations needful for a journey of some weeks into the wilderness, involve, as the reader may suppose, some little trouble; and no one who has ever been at Cairo, but has probably had reason gratefully to acknowledge the kindness and foresight of the L——s, to which I myself was peculiarly indebted. The first and most important point, upon which everything depends on such occasions, is to find a good servant. I was fortunate enough to obtain the services of Komeh, or Hadji Komeh, as the Arabs loved to call him, (for he had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca,) who had accompanied Dr. Robinson on his journey, and of whom honourable mention has been made by him, as well as his coadjutor Ibrahim, then a lad, but now grown up into a powerful young man. Stephens says that his servant was the greatest coward the sun ever shone upon—Komeh was the most intrepid fellow that ever took an Arab by the beard. He was a man about forty, and a native of Cairo, short, stout, and powerful; with a broad round back, and sturdy legs bowed outwards; one who seemed to take "well hould of the ground," and appeared to be built for robust exertion, a quality of no small value in the Desert. He looked more like a Yorkshireman in disguise, than a sallow Caireen; having a bluff, ruddy, and fearless face, honest and almost simple in its general expression, but with an occasional roll of the eye that showed he was not one to be "done" with impunity. Admirable was his tact at managing the Bedouins, who at once loved and feared him. These gentry often occasion, by

their craft and obstinacy, no little annoyance to the traveller; and woe be to him if his servant proves craven in the hour of need! On such occasions, often have I seen my courageous follower opposed to many times his number, but in himself a host, and though unarmed, possessing in the chest of a buffalo, and a pair of huge and brawny fists,

"what seemed both spear and shield,"—

dash down his pipe upon the sand, and menace the delinquents; (nor did he always confine himself to mere threats;) till pacified by their submissive appeals, he would resume it, subside, under the blessed influence of half-a-dozen whiffs, into his habitual state of placability, and presently be seated in the midst of the Arabs like a little king. Such a man was invaluable: I could have trusted him with my goods and life; and his continual good-humour to myself, among all the difficulties of the Desert, was indeed a continual feast. In fact, he lacked but one thing, and that was the gift of tongues, speaking only Arabic, besides a few words of broken English and Italian, which, combined in different ways, and eked out with signs and gesticulations, served as the sole basis of our intercourse with each other, and, what was worse, with the Arabs.

Mrs. L. had bespoke for me a tent, which was pitched that I might see it: a superb and very commodious affair, ornamented with colours and devices fit for a pasha, and far better than I should have thought of; but it was not in human nature to refuse so smart a thing when once up; besides that, the price was moderate, I think, three hundred piastres. I afterwards found the comfort of it, and frequently rejoiced that I had not chosen an inferior one. It is true that one *may* do without tent or bedding in the Desert; but it is hard work: you have no shelter either from heat, cold, rain, or sand-storms; no privacy, of course, or sense of comfort, to say nothing of consideration in the eyes of the Arabs. A second and smaller tent was lent to us by Mr. L., for the servants; but they rarely took the trouble of pitching it.

To provision ourselves was the next point; and as I was desirous of hitting, if possible, the *juste milieu* between starvation and prodigality, we repaired to the shop of old Carlo Peni, near the consulate, and there, in conclave, decided on the following articles, the quantity of which served well for the entire tour to Petra, though of six weeks' duration, and, in reality, calculated at the time as for a far shorter period. I give the list, hoping it may save some trouble to future travellers, and amuse the general reader with a picture of Desert housekeeping.

September 27.—

	Piastres.
2 okas Lump Sugar, at 6 piastres (100 piastres equal £1. sterling)	12
40 „ Biscuits, (instead of bread,) at 2 piastres	80
4 „ Soap, (none in the Desert, nor washerwomen,) at 7 piastres	28
10 „ Rice, at 3 piastres	30
20 rotl., each 2lbs., Coffee. (A very large supply is needful, as nothing is done without it,) at 3 piastres	60
3 okas Tobacco, at 15 piastres	45
1 bag for ditto	5
Onions, (very desirable for stewing)	10
Lentiles, (for soup, similar to peas)	12
Charcoal. (A small quantity is needful for occasional use, when no brush-wood can be had)	10
12 okas Potatoes, (invaluable)	18
Dates	10
3 okas Dried Apricots, (delicious and refreshing when stewed)	18
2 packets Wax Candles	20
An Arab Paper Lantern for ditto	5
12 okas Chocolate	24
1 „ Salt	4
1 box Pepper	4
3 bottles Cognac, (more desirable than wine or beer, on account of the bad water, but must be temperately used)	42
1 Cantine, with lock, (a box of palm-sticks, made expressly for carrying various small necessary articles)	25
5 okas Liquid Cooking-Butter and Pot	38
Matches	6
8 Nets for the camels, complete, (to sling small packages in)	50
3 Water-Skins, complete, (Much care is requisite to get them, not *new*, but sufficiently seasoned not to flavour the water, and they never should be laid on the *sand*, but on the nets. *A filter is highly desirable*)	90

	Piastres.
2 Zemzemie, or leathern Drinking-Bottles	30
1 Large Cooking-Pot	5
Cords, Thread, Needles, &c., (A few extra pegs too, for the tent, are very necessary, of iron if possible)	16
2 common Pipes, (for Arabs;) Umbrella of double Cotton; double Straw, or *light* Hat, well lined	10
12 Fowls, Cafass, (or coop,) and Corn. (We did not find any of them die, as often reported; but they require care.)	25
3 Camp Stools, (broad and low—*very useful*)	60

Some pieces of Oilcloth to spread under, or put over the tent, in case of rain, when on the march.

Tea.

Curry-Powder, (desirable for seasoning a tough fowl occasionally.)

Marmalade, (very refreshing and easily carried.)

Lemons, (a good supply.)

Eau de Cologne which should be put in a stone bottle.

All these arranged in the cafasses, or in loose bags.

To these might be added, as luxuries, preserved meats, portable soups, wine, beer, &c. *à discretion*, any considerable quantity of course requiring an extra camel. Carpet, mattress, sheets, &c., all these may be obtained at Cairo, and cooking utensils, &c. A supply of fresh provisions, to last a few days: fowls and eggs may occasionally be met with, as at Suez and Akaba; and a sheep or kid procured from the Arabs of the Desert: milk rarely, except in the rainy season: dates occasionally. The traveller has *nothing to do* with provisioning his Arabs, unless by special agreement; though not unfrequently they seek to establish a claim; and, in fact, from habitual want of calculation, their stores are often run out, so that a small supply of rice and biscuits must now and then be given them; but care and foresight are needful, without which the traveller, on whom privation tells far more seriously than on his guides, may find himself destitute, without any means of replenishing his stock.

There is now no lack of Bedouins in Cairo since the establishment of the overland mail; we soon found an Arab, with whom a contract was made at the consulate.*

* I do not give its details, further than to state that the price stipulated was far too high, and the whole money was to be paid in advance. This I, at

I took no arms in addition to an old pair of Turkish pistols; nor were others necessary, although a good double-barrelled English one, of which the Orientals stand much in awe, might be a valuable companion on a solitary ramble away from the track. As to dress, it is decidedly better, both for comfort and safety, to travel in a light European costume, the English name being sufficient protection. A few articles, such as a handsome tarboosh, sash, &c., may occasionally be useful as an addition to ordinary equipment, when it is desirable to make an impression; and a clean shirt is not without its moral effect even in the wilderness, and among people whose linen looks as if it had come down unwashed from the days of Ishmael. A few articles of Eastern finery may also occasionally be useful as presents.

At length, everything being ready, the camels blockading the door, and the usual clamour of the Arabs filling the street, I left the hotel to pay one or two farewell visits, and joined my little caravan in the cemetery outside the Bab-en-Nusr, or Gate of Victory, where the splendid domes of the tombs of the Memlook sultans —the perfection of Arabian architecture—rise like an exhalation from the lonely waste. By unusually good management the camels, often reloaded here, were already provided with their respective burdens, and I had nothing to do but to start. It was so much earlier than I had expected to be ready, that no one was found to give me a parting convoy; and I stood in the dead, oppressive heat of noon, alone on the verge of the Desert. The hot film trembled over the far-stretched and apparently boundless sands; and

first, consented to, because informed at the consulate that such was the usual practice; but it is quite clear that if so the practice should be done away with —indeed I did not fulfil it myself. The Arabs can have no occasion for such a sum, and it is the height of folly so to leave oneself at their mercy. It is obviously the traveller who requires every power that can be given him to overawe his often refractory guides; for otherwise they may not only harass him with petty opposition, but actually prevent his visits to many spots of interest. I fixed the number of camels at five, which is the utmost a traveller with one servant can ever require; indeed, with management, four may well suffice, and six for a party of two.

though I had looked forward with delight to the time of setting off, the journey now for the first time seemed formidable; and with not even a friendly shake of the hand, or a parting God-b'w'ye—within a stone's throw too of the grave of poor Burckhardt, I could not repress a feeling of melancholy. But the Arabs cut this short, by suddenly leaping up out of the shade of a ruined tomb, and mechanically bringing forward my dromedary, over whose wooden packsaddle, mattress, carpet, and saddlebags were spread, so as to make a broad and comfortable seat; the growling animal was forced upon its knees; and leaping on, and holding firm by the pegs of the saddle as he suddenly rose up on his hind legs, I achieved (more fortunate than some others) my first ascent without pitching head foremost upon the sands, which I accounted a good omen: the others were ready, and we paced off on our noiseless track over the broad expanse, as a vessel spreads its sail and slips quietly out to sea; while the minarets of Cairo grew fainter and fainter, till we lost them in the red and dusky haze of an Egyptian atmosphere.

A singular and half-dreamy sensation is that of first riding a camel, the very opposite to that quickening of the pulse which comes to us on horseback. Your seat, on a broad pile of carpets, is so easy and indolent, the pace of the animal so equal and quiet,—instead of the noisy clatter of hoofs, you scarcely hear the measured and monotonous impress of the broad soft foot on the yielding sand,—the air fans you so lazily as you move along; from your lofty post your view over the Desert is so widely extended, the quiet is so intense, that you fall by degrees into a state of pleasurable reverie, mingling early ideas of the East with their almost fanciful realization. And thus the hours pass away till a sense of physical uneasiness begins to predominate, and at length becomes absorbing. It now appears that the chief and only art in camel-riding lies in the nice poising and management of the vertebral column, which seems to refuse its office, though you sustain its failing functions by a desperate tightening of your belt. To sit quite upright for a length of time is difficult on account of your extended legs: you throw your weight alternately to the right or left, lean dangerously forward on the pummel, sit side-

ways, or lounge desperately backwards, all in vain. The *beau sexe* have, for obvious reasons, decidedly the best of it in this exercise. To lose your sense of weariness you seek to urge the animal to a trot ; but a few such experiments suffice, fatigue is better than downright dislocation, and you resign yourself perforce to the horrible see-saw and provoking tranquillity of your weary pace, till the sun's decline enables you to descend and walk over the shining gravel. With this it will be plain that no one makes his first day's journey in the Desert a long one, and we joyfully encamped for the night in a Wady,* a little beyond the first station† of the Transit Company.

October 1. Before sunrise the tent was struck, the camels loaded, and we were on our way. The Desert between Cairo and Suez is so much relieved of its loneliness and peril by the establishment of the overland route, with its numerous stations, that, as yet, one feels within the reach and influence of civilization. The surface of the waste is, for the whole way, nearly level, or slightly undulating ; the soil, firm gravel, with occasional sand : the marks of wheels are curiously intermingled with the numerous camel-tracks formed by the caravans, and the half-eaten carcase of the old carrier of the Desert is seen side by side with a broken-down modern omnibus ; one station is hardly passed before another comes in sight, and thus the Desert seems cheated of its wildness ; yet we found this portion of our route emphatically the most wearisome. For the whole way there is no object of the slightest interest. The stations, glittering afar off in the clear atmosphere, seem nearer than they are, and provokingly recede at our approach. We halted this evening near the central station, in sight of the *one tree* which marks the half-way point between Cairo and Suez.

October 2. Off again before sunrise. I am now beginning to get into Desert life, and, at the outset at least, relish it very much as a novelty, and as realizing the wish I had so often formed to be abroad in the wilderness. Very early in the cool of the morning, ere yet the

* *Wady* signifies valley, or a watercourse.

† These occur at about every ten miles, the central one being furnished as a temporary hotel, with tanks of water, formed at a great expense.

paling stars have faded from the heavens, Komeh is stirring, a fire kindled, coffee made, the Arabs on the alert, the straggling camels called in; and, while hastily washing, the tent is struck and rolled up; and our temporary settlement, so snug the night before, is all taking to itself wings, and leaving no trace but the marks of boxes, and other chattels, impressions of tent-poles, and the ashes of our vanished hearth, which the next wind will efface.

The camels growl, struggle, and show their teeth as they are

forced to kneel and receive their loads, then one by one jump up and assume that monotonous pace and placid expression, which they never vary through the long and weary day, unless again forced to kneel down. The sun is not yet up, though there is a glorious radiance through the vast opal concave of the sky; and it is for some time delightful to walk over the fine shining gravel-surface of the silent Desert, my cheerful Komeh by my side, with his pipe, and the Arabs in straggling groups coming up slowly behind. What most surprised me was the elasticity of spirits I generally experienced in the wilderness. The dry pure air probably had much to do with this. Sometimes the sense of free movement over the boundless expanse was indescribably and wildly ecstatic; in general the incidents of our little caravan seemed sufficient stimulus, and a universal cheerfulness prevailed among us in those hours of dawn.

But as the sun rose higher and higher into the cloudless sky, and the blanched surface of the Desert glared under his fiery beams, and the reflection from the glittering and heated waste dazzled the eye and seemed to pierce to the very brain, it was another matter. The camels now groan with distress; the Arabs are silent, slipping from time to time along-side the water-skins, and, with their mouths to the orifice, catching a few gulps without stopping; then, burying their heads in the ample bernous, pace on again quietly—hour after hour. The water, which smacks of the leathern bottle, or Zemzemia, in which it is contained, warm, insipid, and even nauseous, seems but to increase the parching thirst; the brain is clouded and paralysed by the intolerable sultriness; and, with the eyes protected by a handkerchief from the reflected glare of the sand, and swaying listlessly to and fro, I keep at the same horrible pace along the burning track.

> "All-conquering heat, O intermit thy wrath!
> And on my throbbing temples potent thus
> Beam not so fierce! Incessant still you flow,
> And still another fervent flood succeeds,
> Poured on the head profuse. In vain I sigh,
> And restless turn, and look around for night:
> Night is far off; and hotter hours approach!"

One would think that Thomson had penned these lines on the back of a camel in the Desert. The hot film, like the low of a kiln, now trembles over the glistening sands, and plays the most fantastic tricks with the suffering traveller, cheating his vision with an illusory supply of what his senses madly crave. Half-dozing, half-dreaming, as I advanced, lulled into vague reverie, the startling MIRAGE, shifting with magic play, expands in gleaming blue lakes, whose cool borders are adorned with waving groves, and on whose shining banks the mimic waves, with wonderful illusion, break in long glittering lines of transparent water—bright, fresh water, so different from the leathery decoction of the Zemzemia. On our approach the vision recedes, dissolves, combines again into new forms, all fancifully beautiful; then slowly fades, and leaves but the burn-

ing horizon, upon which, at wide intervals, is seen, perhaps, a dim black speck, appearing over the rolling sandy swell like a ship far out at sea; the film of the Desert gives it gigantic dimensions as it approaches: it proves, as it nears us, to be a caravan of camels from Suez, coming along with noiseless tread,—a few laconic words are exchanged between the Arabs without stopping; in another hour it is left far behind, until again it disappears from vision. Thus pass the sultry and silent hours of noon. There is a terrible and triumphant power of the sun upon this wide region of sterility and death, like that of a despot over a realm blighted by his destructive sway: no trace of verdure is there but the stunted shrub, which straggles at wide intervals about the sandy bed of some dried watercourse; no sign of living thing but the burrow of the rat, the slimy trail of the serpent, or the carcase of the camel, who makes his grave as well as his home in the wilderness, met with in every stage of decay, from the moment when the vultures have but just fleshed their beaks in his fallen corpse, till, stripped of every integument, the wind whistles through the ghastly framework of his naked ribs, and his bones, falling asunder and bleached by heat and wind, serve to mark the appointed track upon which his strength was spent.

As the declining orb wheels round to the westward the shadows lengthen from the camel—the timepiece as well as the ship of the Desert. Now all descend and walk, enjoying the growing coolness, and looking forward with delight to the signal to encamp. The Arabs, as the sun's disc nearly touches the horizon, look out for the best halting-place, where the surface is hard and the tent-pins will easily hold, and where there is promise of a little scanty browsing for the camels. All is now activity; and, throwing myself at length on a cushion of sand beneath a solitary retem-bush, I watch the lonely descent of the sun below the sandy waste and the rapid establishment of my temporary home. The surface of the desert reflects the splendour of the ruddy orb, like the molten surface of a heaving sea. The camels, unloaded, are soon scattered about among the brushwood; or, if that is too scanty, lie down and are fed with a small bag of beans, which it is a pleasure to hear them crunch. Up

flies the tent, the strongest Arab holding by the centre pole, while Komeh and the others vigorously drive in the pegs and fasten round the curtains,—the work of a few minutes. Mats and carpets cover the fine sand within, mattress and pillow are spread out, camp-stools are arranged round, saddle-bags fill up the background, the lantern is strung from the centre pole, and there is a completeness and comfort, nay, luxury, about your little home, which is wanting in many a pompous hotel in France or Italy. Fresh ablutions restore you; and before this, Komeh is already busy in his culinary operations; for one of the Arabs has brought in a pile of sticks, while some are engaged in arranging the packsaddles and gear beyond, and the rest in making their evening cake.

With the twilight falls the grateful dew, and comes on the refreshing breeze, cooling the heated surface of the wilderness, and restoring the languid frame of the traveller. Wander but a few paces from the encampment, and listen in the profound of the solitude to the low and melancholy sugh of the night wind, which sweeps the light surface of the sand, and drifts it against the canvass wall of the tent; that breeze, laden with the voice of ages, which traverses the old historic desert, and has waved the long grass and stirred the slumbering waters of the ancient fountains where the patriarchs encamped with their flocks. There is a rapture in pacing alone with such fancies among the drifted sand-heaps, and listening to that wild music, till night has fallen upon the wilderness, over which millions of stars, rising up resplendently from the very edge of the vast horizon, seem quietly brooding. One may hear, as it were, the solemn pulsation of the universe. No wonder that of old the shepherds of the Desert were star-worshippers; to the uninstructed spiritual impulse, ignorant of the unity of the Great Cause, the glorious brightness of these radiant orbs must have appeared supernatural; for there are here no works of man to distract the absorbing contemplation of the heavens in their glory; that little patch of earth from which alone lights gleam and a few broken sounds arise, that temporary halting-place, to be given back on the morrow to the mighty waste, seems but to render more awful the countlessness of these revolving

worlds, receding from the nearest planets, bright as angels, into the dim nebulæ of furthest space.

> "Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
> In solitude, when we are least alone."

I shall not, however, dwell on the solemnity of such moments. Man, although his thoughts may roll through space itself, must, however humbling the reflection, ultimately "drop into himself," and *dine*, with a relish too, after a ten hours' ride, as keen and absorbing as that of the unwieldy brutes around him, that, crunching the prickly shrubs, gaze prone and stupid on the sand.

Walking back to the tent, I catch sight of preparations grateful to a hungry stomach, for the chief meal in the Desert is taken in the evening, and its announcement is looked for with the most intense interest. On entering I find the transparent lamp lighted, and casting a cheerful glow upon the red curtains of the tent; my portmanteau and camp-stool arranged as a table, with (at starting) a clean tablecloth; for there is as little occasion to sup off your "dirty towel," as to confine yourself to the *one shirt* of Laborde.* My chief standing dish was that, the memory of which haunted Stephens with visions of departed joys—to wit, an Irish stew; and I would defy the most fastidious gourmand, were he here, to refrain from falling upon it with eager relish. It is, indeed, *the* very dish for the Desert. Another common *plat*, in addition to an occasional roast lamb or kid, was curried rice and fowl, with lentile soup, the pottage of Esau; followed by stewed apricots, or marmalade, with moistened biscuit, in lieu of bread; after which, tea, (oh how refreshing, though generally milkless!) in copious draughts, relieved at length the thirst that nothing else would assuage. For this, when a cup too low, a glass or two of punch was now and then substituted. Such was my ordinary living; it might, as before said, have been more luxurious; but it was well enough, in fact; and it is sufficient to show that the privations of many travellers, for which they draw

* Vide Laborde's account of his preparations.

so pathetically on the reader's compassion, are either affected, like the well-feigned woes of the beggar, or, if real, are at least owing to their own want of proper foresight. I consider that the want of water is the only real hardship ; not that, though in the wilderness, there can then be any occasion to use sand instead of water for one's ablutions, as some declare they were compelled to do ; or to adopt what painters call " the nasty picturesque" in any of one's habits. This term, so characteristic of the Bedouins, reminds me that it is well not to associate *too* closely with them, nor to admit them unnecessarily within the sacred enclosure of one's tent. By *their* fire, on the clean sand, it is pleasant to join their wild bivouac ; but beware the contact of their tattered garments with your nightly couch. People often complain of the destruction, one by one, of all their oriental illusions ; and, after watching a hairy Bedouin sheik chasing certain minute game through the folds of his drapery, and finding several in one's sheets, one would feel disposed to keep the very patriarchs themselves at a distance. After the above discovery, I always laid my own carpet, folded my own sheets, and loaded my own dromedary, and had every reason to rejoice that I did so, in an entire exemption, for the future, from every sort of vermin ; an assertion which will tend to relieve such as may have been alarmed, with reason, at the disclosures of Messrs. Irby and Mangles.*

After our supper, the remains of which were distributed among those of the Bedouins who, by fetching wood and assisting in the cookery, contrived to establish a claim, I often went out and joined

* " A traveller in these countries, however much the thought may shock him at first, must make up his mind to be constantly covered with lice and fleas : we kill every day from ten to twenty of these gentry, who are always to be found on every mat or cushion used in the country. These nauseous visitors seldom get into the head, but crawl about your shirt and clothes. Every native you see is covered with them, and if you ask why they have such a plentiful store, while we are comparatively so little attacked, they tell you ' it is the curse of God on them.' The other day I cut my foot, and our Arab Seys, (who has accompanied us all the way from Yaffa, and is a very cleanly person, washing himself constantly,) tore off a small piece of the sleeve of his shirt to apply to the wound : the piece was about three inches long by two wide, and before using it, I killed on it three lice and two fleas !"—*Irby, &c.*

them. They were seated apart, round a large fire, which glared upon their savage, but often noble features, wild dress and accoutrements, and the heads of camels dozing in the grateful warmth, shooting a few rays beyond into the blackness and silence around, presenting a subject that Rembrandt would have revelled in. The Bedouins in their ordinary habits, and unless excited by any subject of dispute, are as "subdued in manner" as the most fastidious aristocrat might desire. The wide expanse and brooding silence of the outstretched wilderness seem to fall like an influence upon them, moulding their thoughts and actions into conformity with the elements they move in. They are also singularly temperate in their habits; and, as yet, have not acquired a taste for drinking from travellers or recreant Moslems. Not all the wines in the world were to them worth those minute cups of sugarless coffee which made their round, often till late into the night, and the whiff of their broken pipe, which also passed round, accompanying the endless tales, in which Komeh, I found, was no mean proficient; for, besides the marvellous subjects common to the Arabs, he had moreover his stock of foreign travel to Mecca, and into Abyssinia, and elsewhere, upon which to draw for startling adventures. At length, wrapped in their scanty cloaks, these children of the Desert, and even their camels, sleep, as the proverb has it, with one eye open, in a circle built up of packsaddles and gear; the camel, it is said, uttering a peculiar suppressed sound at the approach of anything suspicious. Such is the ordinary routine of the day and night in the wilderness; and with good health and spirits, it is for a while delightful.

October 3. From an early hour we were anxiously looking out for the Red-Sea; but, for a long while, the treacherous film of the mirage entirely bewildered the prospect. At length we obtained a first view of its memorable waters, running up, like a broad lake or river, between ranges of dull dark mountains; Djebel Attaka (the Mount of Deliverance) appearing as the conspicuous landmark, and the arid sandy slope, which descends to its shores, being dotted by three white specks, which indicated man's abode. On the left was

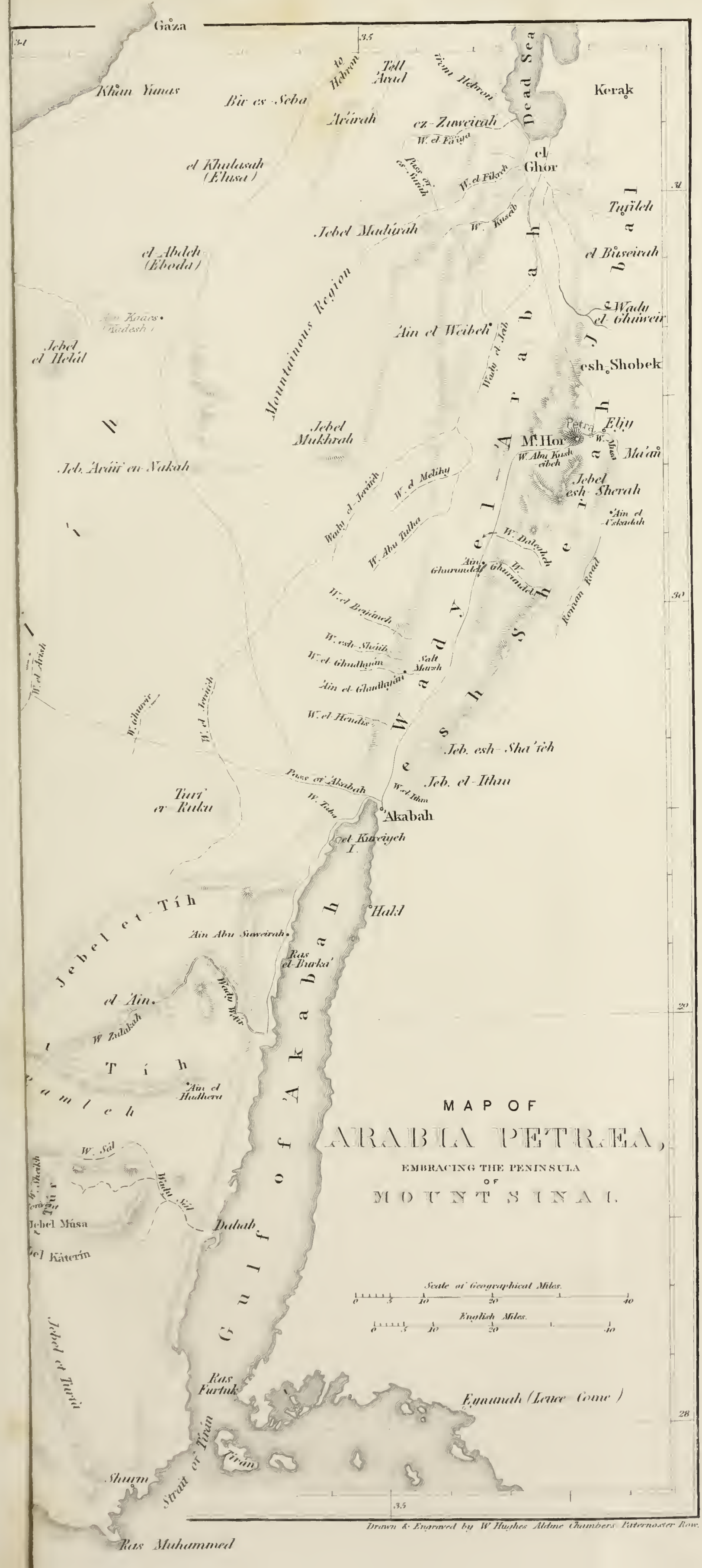
the Castle of Ajrud, the first fortified station on the pilgrim-road to Mecca; the second, a similar but smaller structure, called Bir Suweis, the Well of Suez; lastly, that dull prison-looking town itself—the half-way house between the most mighty of modern nations and her colossal Indian empire. The steamer from Bombay was rapidly coming up the solitary gulf. What sight more common at home?—yet here, to see that swift-winged messenger, keeping, in defiance of wind and weather, "her steady course both day and night," with her freight of momentous interests, national and domestic, and binding hearts that beat in the green homes of England to those of distant relatives in the burning East,—one of those links of civilization, those pioneers of Christianity, with which our beloved country is encircling the world,—might well awaken a thrill of proud and patriotic emotion. And as I toiled along, at two miles an hour, in patriarchal fashion, perched on the back of the old carrier of the Desert, and saw, at the same time, that marvellous creation of modern skill cleaving the very waters of the miraculous passage, and casting anchor beyond the shoals of Suez, I seemed to realize at once the old world with its prodigies, and the new with its onward and gigantic movement, and to bridge the wide and troublous interval of ages and of revolutions by which they are divided.

In the conveyance of the mail across the Desert, there is the same curious blending of the past and present. "Those," says Sir W. C. Harris, "who, like myself, have viewed the overland communication as the connecting link with their native land, will be horrified, as I was, with the singular preparations making in the court-yard adjoining the agent's house, for the transmission across the Desert of the numerous boxes containing the mail. Hundreds of refractory camel-owners flock together with their turbulent beasts of burden, and the clamour and Babel-like confusion is presently at its climax. All are eagerly eyeing the pile of cases, but none venture to approach. Suddenly two or three janissaries, whose office it is to superintend the distribution, arise from their seats, cast aside their long pipes, and lay about with their ratans in

the most indiscriminate fashion, without either favour or affection. A general rush ensues: camels growl and drivers curse. The packages are rudely lashed upon the saddles, and, as the loading of each dromedary is completed, away he goes at a trot into the dusky Desert, and is soon veiled from sight in the flat horizon. From the moment of starting each party is left to his own devices, with a simple understanding that he is to make the best of his way to Cairo; and every letter of the thousands and tens of thousands thus consigned to the Desert, reaches its destination in from sixteen to twenty hours."

We halted a moment to give our camels a little brackish water at the Well of Suez; and, as we proceeded towards the town, encountered a file of these old-fashioned carriers, laden as described, who may find, some of these days, their occupation gone, by the construction of a railroad, or the revival at least of the canal of the old Egyptian kings. Next issued forth several of the light vans in which the passengers are conveyed to Cairo, their Arab drivers furiously cracking their whips, and urging along the slight but sinewy horses at top speed over the gravel. From beneath the awnings which shaded these carriages peeped forth faces, from which, for the most part, all trace of the rose of England had for ever vanished; pale women, with sickly children, tended by dusky Indian ayahs; bronzed and sinewy-looking men too, negligent in costume, and indifferent in look, but with all that calm hauteur which cleaves to the masters of the world, some of whom, indeed, appeared to be seasoned to the climate; while others, stricken by its fatal influence, seemed hurrying home but to die, or drag out the remainder of a life robbed of that elasticity of nerves and spirits which alone can render it desirable; with whom to reach once more the chalk cliffs of England, and to breathe again the air of her green fields, is the one absorbing feeling.

It was after my return from the Desert, myself broken in health, when standing on the deck of the small steamer which plies from Cairo to Alexandria, that an old medical friend, residing in the former place, came on board with a patient a young officer, to whom


MAP OF
ARABIA PETRÆA,
EMBRACING THE PENINSULA
OF
MOUNT SINAI.
Scale of Geographical Miles.
English Miles.
Drawn & Engraved by W. Hughes Aldine Chambers Paternoster Row.
Gaza
Khan Yunas
Bir es Seba
Tell Arad
'Ararah
ez-Zuweirah
Dead Sea
Kerak
el Ghor
el Khulasah (Elusa)
Jebel Madurah
Tufileh
el Buseirah
el Abdeh (Eboda)
Mountainous Region
'Ain el Weibeh
Wadu el Ghuweir
Jebel el Helál
esh Shobek
Jebel Mukhrah
Mt. Hor
Petra
Elji
Ma'an
Jebel esh Sherah
Jeb. 'Aráif en Nakah
Wady el Jeib
Wady el 'Arabah
W. Abu Tulha
W. el Jerafeh
'Ain Ghurundel
W. Ghurundel
Roman Road
W. el Arish
W. el Jerafeh
Salt Marsh
W. el Hendis
Jeb. esh Sha'feh
Jeb. el Ithm
Pass of 'Akabah
W. Taba
'Akabah
Turf er Rukn
el Kureiyeh I.
Jebel et Tíh
Hakl
'Ain Abu Suweirah
Ras el-Burka'
Wady Watir
el 'Ain
W. Zulakah
Tíh
'Ain el Hudhera
Ramleh
W. Sál
Wady Sál
Jebel Músa
Jebel Katerin
Dahab
Gulf of 'Akabah
Jebel et Turáf
Ras Furtak
Eynunah (Leuce Come)
Tiran
Strait of Tirán
Shurm
Ras Muhammed


MAP OF
ARABIA PETRÆA,
EMBRACING THE PENINSULA
OF
MOUNT SINAI.
Mediterranean Sea
Gaza
Khan Yunas
Ras Kazarun
Ras Straki
el Arish
Tineh (Pelusium)
Katieh
Menzaleh
Mansurah
Pelusiac Branch
Birket Temseh
Belbeis
Salt Marshes (below the level of the Sea)
CAIRO
Matarieh
Tura
Castle of Ajrud
Suez
Jebel Atakah
Wady et Tawarik
River Nile
Egyptian Desert
Gulf of Suez
Jebel er Rahah
Ras W. Ghurundel
Jebel Hummam
Ras Zelimeh
Ras Burdess
Ras Jehan
Wady Feiran
Jebel Serbal
Jebel Musa
Jebel Katerin
Jebel Um Shaumer
Tur
Jebel et Tur
Sherm
Ras Muhammed
Strait of Tiran
Tiran
Ras Furtak
Eynunah (Leuce Come)
Gulf of Akabah
Dahab
Akabah
Hakl
Jebel et Tih
Tih
Debbet er Ramleh
Castle of Nakhl
Jebel Yelek
Jebel el Helal
el Abdeh (Eboda)
el Khulasah (Elusa)
Bir es Seba
Tell Arad
Dead Sea
Kerak
el Ghor
Tufileh
el Busaerah
esh Shobek
Petra
Mt Hor
Jebel esh Sherah
Wady el Arabah
Mountainous Region
Jebel Mukhrah
Jeb esh Sha'ifeh
Jeb el Ithm
St Anthony
St Paul
Longitude East of Greenwich
Scale of Geographical Miles
English Miles
Drawn & Engraved by W. Hughes Aldine Chambers, Paternoster Row

he begged me to render any attentions in my power. "He may die," observed he, "at any moment;" and when I saw him borne down stairs I much questioned whether he would even reach Alexandria alive. I found that he had been some years in India, though young, and had already returned home once for the benefit of his health; but scarcely had he again set foot on the fatal shore of Hindostan, ere he was warned to return instantly if he would save his life. He had been but four months absent from England when thus, with death in his looks, and unable to move without the assistance of two men, he was fighting his way back again. He had left Bombay without a servant; on his arrival at Suez was unable to proceed, lingering for a fortnight in its wretched hotel; then, with a desperate effort, he got across to Cairo, where he had been under the care of my friend for another fourteen days. He had been getting all this while gradually worse, but his spirit was unbroken—the Desert, he said, was behind him, and every day would bring him nearer to his mother, who was anxiously expecting him; "and then," he said, kindly pressing my hand, "you must come and see me." But that meeting will never happen on this side of the grave. Little know the sons of the Desert, who look with awe upon the power of England, of the sacrifices by which it is purchased.

We preferred to encamp by the sea-shore, to catch what little relief we could from the freshness of the breaking surges; for Suez is a desert without its only redeeming quality of freedom. A mouldering wall encircles it, except where open to the sea; within are several void spaces, differing in no respect from the expanse without, save that they are noisome with an accumulation of filth, and save also that they are bordered by large dreary heaps of dingy-coloured houses, which seem about to fall in and bury their sallow inhabitants. Not a green tree or shrub, or a drop of fresh water, and all supplies fetched from a distance, even from Cairo. Scattered about are encampments of pilgrims, mostly Mughreby Arabs, from Western Africa, whose sullen and half-menacing appearance disposes one to give them a wide berth. This dead and alive appearance imposes a melancholy to which one is a stranger in the Desert, and made me

hurry back to my tent, after a very short walk through the bazaar, and to the muddy beach—along which are scattered some singular vessels, built high at the stern, like those of many ages back. The only interesting view was that of the distant mountains towards Sinai, into whose defiles I was now eager to penetrate.

After a brief survey of Suez, and loitering an hour or two on the sands, together with dining under the shade of my tent, I set off towards evening to go across the gulf, walking slowly round the shore in advance of the camels. A short distance from Suez, on the left hand, are the mounds called Tel Kolzum, the ancient Kolzum, or Clysma, near which are several small salt-pans ; and leaving the mounds of the ancient canal far to the left, we struck directly across to the other side, the tide then being out. This appeared to be a well-beaten track, as we met trains of camels, and it is probably the shortest way across the head of the gulf. The ground had evidently been recently overflowed by the sea, which formerly extended, there can be little doubt, still further up to the northward, towards the mounds of the canal (see Map) which communicated with it ; but its bed has gradually become filled up by drifts from the region of shifting sands, which lie to the north and north-east, and which are brought down with such force by the north wind, as in a few hours to raise mounds sufficiently large to obliterate the pilgrim route, as we subsequently found on our return. This part of the gulf must therefore, at one time, have been, beyond all question, both broader and deeper than at present.

The sun had set long before we cleared the sea-beat sands, and reached the plain beyond, on the Asian side of the gulf. There was a wild and most thrilling excitement to me in this passage : the sun set beyond the long dark mass of Mount Attaka—the "Mount of Deliverance"—shooting its fiery rays through a mass of lurid clouds ; a strong wind set up the gulf ; the distant roar of the sea was on our right ; the time, the place, the darkness, the knowledge that either here, or not far hence, is supposed to have occurred so stupendous a manifestation of divine power, affected the imagination with peculiar force : the tempestuous wind ; the divi-

sion of the agitated waves ; the defiling of the trembling Israelites through the awful pass ; the confusion and terror of the host ; the sublime confidence of the leaders ; the grandeur of the terrible catastrophe, were pictured to the soul as they never could have been elsewhere than on these memorable sands. We halted and pitched our tent by star-light on the first rise of the Arabian peninsula, and, with Suez and the stations behind us, felt that we had done with civilization for a while to come.

The Desert, upon which we were now entering, has most probably remained unchanged, save by the slow processes of nature, ever since the remote era of those marvellous events which have stamped its barren sands with so lasting an interest ; no spirit-stirring movements have disturbed its loneliness ; the march of armies, and the shock of conflict, may have been faintly heard on its borders, but the wild Bedouin has retained for ages undisputed possession of its inner solitudes, and wandered through them entirely unmolested by other races of men, and unnoticed, unless, when impelled by curiosity, or, peradventure, by holy zeal, an occasional traveller has now and then solicited his guidance through its weary defiles to the localities sanctified by the miracles of his faith. On the threshold of this theatre of wonders a few remarks suggest themselves, derived from personal observation and from the testimony of others. Some of those who admit the truth of the Biblical history of the Exodus, have often, while retaining the miracles, appeared anxious, as I think uselessly, to give them a rationalist interpretation ; as though the only difficulties were those connected with the admission of the *isolated* prodigies, which occur as exceptions in the course of the narrative. This is especially the case with writers at a distance from the actual scene ; and thus it occurs that in popular histories of the Jews, their gathering on the borders of Egypt, and their march through the wilderness, are, although admitted to be extraordinary and providential circumstances, yet considered as entirely within the pale of natural possibility. The impression on the mind of the visitor to the scene itself is, however, quite different ; for when he comes to view with his own eyes this region of

desolation, and personally to experience its perils and privations, the mere fact of such a multitude subsisting there for any lengthened period, or even hastily passing through it, as far exceeds the passage of the Red Sea, or any other of the recorded exhibitions of divine power, as a continual miracle must surpass an occasional one. When we picture to ourselves a scattered multitude greater than the population of London, with its usual proportion of women and children, of weakness and superannuation, to have organized it on so short a notice, for any journey, and under the most favourable circumstances, could scarcely have come within the range of mortal power; and, unless the "Wilderness" of the Bible was widely different from the Desert of our day, of which we have not the smallest proof, nothing less than a daily succession of miracles could have enabled them to accomplish it. Could they otherwise have braved the hot sands of the Desert, or carried the booty collected from their oppressors, or the necessary stock of food for the *two months which elapsed before the first miraculous supply in the Desert of Sin?* We read of no camels so employed, although very many thousands must otherwise have been necessary. And what must have been the supply of water required for all this host? If, as now, obtainable only at distant intervals, how soon would most of the present wells have been exhausted in supplying the first comers! and where were the means of carrying with them enough to suffice until the next was reached? Either the number and volume of these wells and springs must have been miraculously increased, or the power of endurance of thirst on the part of the wanderers.* To any one who realizes

* "I am filled with wonder that so many travellers should task their ingenuity to get clear of the miracles, which, according to the narrative of Moses, were wrought to facilitate the journey of that vast unwieldy host, when it is demonstrable that they could not have subsisted three days in this desert *without supernatural resources*."—*Rev. E. Olin, Travels, &c.*

"How, in these wide deserts, this host of more than two millions of souls, having no traffic or intercourse with the surrounding hordes, could find supplies of food and water sufficient for their support, *without a constant miracle*, I, for one, am unable to divine. Yet among them we read only of *occasional* longings and complaints; while the tribes that now roam over the same regions, although numbering scarcely as many thousands, are exposed to

these difficulties on the spot, the Exodus of the Israelites must appear, from beginning to end, to require a succession of continual miracles, although mention is made of only a few. This merely *partial* allusion to supernatural interposition made in the sacred history, is a difficulty, doubtless, more frequently felt than expressed by those travellers who uphold its divine inspiration ; while to an opposite class, this apparent contradiction, or more properly omission, may, perhaps, tend to give it, apart from other difficulties, the character of a merely legendary narrative, founded on some slender basis of fact now difficult to trace. But if the confiding Christian will admit any hypothesis rather than this, and will recoil from the idea of rejecting that which is given because more is not given, the mere student of history will admit that all the information which has been of late years so abundantly derived from Egyptian monuments,* proves that the author of the Pentateuch was learned in all the wisdom of that nation, and that no more plausible theory has ever, as yet, been suggested, to explain the admitted forcible seizure and possession of Palestine, by the children of Israel, than such an Exodus as is there detailed.

Before proceeding further it may be well to notice, briefly, the different theories respecting the passage of the Red Sea. There are two spots which have been fixed upon, in modern times, as the most probable points at which the passage commenced ; the first at the mouth of Wady Tawarik, the second somewhere in the neighbourhood of Suez. (See Map.) The latter derives its main support from the supposed position of the land of Goshen, which there is strong reason to believe to be identical with the modern province of Es-Shŭrkîyeh, on the Pelusiac, or eastern branch of the Nile, extending to the verge of the Desert, while it is supposed that Zoan (Tanis) was at that time the seat of the Pharaohs. The distance from the borders of this tract to the Red Sea, near Suez, is

famine and privation of every kind ; and, at the best, obtain only a meagre and precarious subsistence."—*Rev. E. Robinson's Biblical Researches.*

* See in particular, Hengstenberg's Book of Moses Illustrated from the Monuments of Egypt, edited by Dr. W. C. Taylor.

about thirty miles, which would be a moderate three days' journey for the cumbrous host of the Israelites. On approaching the borders of the sea, their proper course would obviously have been to the east of the head of the gulf, direct into the Wilderness of Sinai ; but we are informed that a false movement was ordered, for the express purpose of inducing the Egyptians to conclude that they were " entangled in the land ;" and this consisted in their passing to the west of the gulf, and thus having the high mountains of Djebel Attaka on the right, and the sea on the left, while the Egyptians threatened their rear. In this perilous dilemma they are supposed then to have encamped on the sea-shore near Suez ; and, while their movements were concealed or protected by the pillar of cloud, a strong east or north-east wind, blowing with preternatural force, opened to them a passage to the opposite shore of the gulf, here about three or four miles wide ; a distance which, to say the least, might easily be accomplished in the course of a night. There are still two fords in the neighbourhood of Suez ; (one, in some places, breast high, passed by Dr. Madden ; the other less dangerous ;) the bottom of both is flat and sandy, and as there can be little doubt this arm of the gulf was at that time both wider and deeper, the miracle would be sufficiently striking. It is in favour of this theory that the Egyptians should have followed after the Israelites ; for although, without the supposition of a miraculous infatuation, which is indeed implied, it is inconceivable why, with their rapid chariots, they should not rather have preferred to turn, in an hour or two, the head of the gulf, and thus have hemmed in the retreating Jews ; still we cannot imagine that they could, even if disposed, have effected their descent, with these same chariots, into the uneven bed of the sea far lower down, where its depths, and the consequent steepness of its banks, would have been insuperable obstacles.

Those who contend for the greater probability of the passage having taken place some distance below Suez, from the mouth of Wady Tawarik, are as much influenced by the consideration that the miracle would here be far *more* striking,* as Niebuhr, in

* See Olin, Stephens &c.

fixing it at Suez was, perhaps, by the *opposite* one. Some have supposed that the Israelites, instead of setting out from the neighbourhood of Zoan, departed either from that of Memphis or Heliopolis, and that thus their route lay along the Wady Tawarik, which stretches from the neighbourhood of Toura, near Cairo, down to the Red Sea: but others, while following the received supposition that the Land of Goshen was near Zoan, and that the Israelites proceeded thence to the Red Sea, conceive, that in order to render the miracle more remarkable, they were allowed to proceed thus far out of their proper course, in order to tempt the Egyptians after them; and that when they were at length hemmed in on either hand by the two rocky walls of Wady Tawarik, with the sea in front, their great deliverance was effected; and that crossing at this point they came out some miles *lower down* on the Arabian side, not far from Ayûn Musa. Unquestionably the miracle would here have been far more conspicuous and awful; but the width of the sea is greater than we can suppose the Israelites to have passed in a few hours, encumbered as they were; and, as before said, it is utterly inconceivable that the Egyptians with their chariots, could ever have followed them into the coralline and weedy depths of a sea some twelve miles wide, unless, indeed, miraculously enabled, as well as impelled, to do so.

I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Sharpe for the suggestion of another and a very remarkable theory, borne out in a very striking manner by local peculiarities; and as its exposition includes also much interesting notices of the ancient canals and roads across the Isthmus, the reader will, I am sure, be gratified by the insertion of his paper. I may observe that all the stations alluded to are carefully inserted on the map by his own direction.

On the Land of Goshen, and the Jews' March out of Egypt, by Samuel Sharpe, Esq.

The country between Cairo, the Gulf of Suez, and the Mediterranean, has fewer ancient ruins than the other parts of Egypt; and the traveller is interested there more by the recollection of the historic scenes than by the works of art that remain. It was there that Plato studied, that Jeremiah

wrote his Lamentations; and still earlier, that Moses planned and carried into effect the liberation of his suffering countrymen. It is therefore a work of no little interest to search for, and to point out, the spots which history has thus made famous. The names of the towns have changed again and again; they differ in the Hebrew and Greek and Arabic writers; but we will begin with leading the reader, by the help of the Roman *Itinerarium* and the Map, along the public roads as they existed in the time of the Antonines, and then endeavour to show the towns mentioned by Moses.

We will start from Memphis, the capital of the Pharaohs of Lower Egypt, and from the pyramids which some of them had built as their tombs. If we would reach Pelusium, the frontier city, near the mouth of the most easterly branch of the Nile, we cannot without a boat cross the river to Babylon, the Roman fortress opposite, as the water is too deep to be forded; but fifteen miles lower down, after it is divided into three channels, it may be forded on horseback when the Nile is lowest, or even by men on foot if they do not mind being wet to the waist. These fords the troops of Perdiccas bravely attempted to pass, in the face of the first Ptolemy's army. One they crossed; but were routed at the second, while fighting up to their breasts in the water. On leaving the fords, the road leads across Trajan's Canal to Heliopolis, which, by this roundabout way, is twenty-four miles from Memphis, though only twelve miles from Babylon. Heliopolis was one of the great seats of Egyptian learning: there Plato and Eudoxus studied; and when Strabo afterwards visited the city, the house in which they dwelt was pointed out to him, to warm his love of virtue.

From Heliopolis the road runs nearly straight, and about north-east, towards Pelusium. To the town of Scenæ, or *The Tents*, is eighteen miles, leaving on the left the town of Onion, where the Jews of Egypt built their temple; then to Vicus Judæorum is twelve miles, and then to Thoum, or Pa-tumos, is twelve miles. Thus far the fertile valley of the Nile has been on the left-hand, and the Desert sand-hills on the right; but at Thoum a second valley runs due eastward, towards the Bitter Lakes, and is made fertile by the canal. Eight miles to the west of Thoum is the great city of Bubastis, once the capital of that part of Egypt: but proceeding towards Pelusium, from Thoum to Tasacarta, is twenty-four miles; then to Daphnæ is eighteen miles; and then, lastly, to Pelusium is twenty miles, and the road crosses the marshes, near the Nile, which Nectanebo had deepened into a trench, to strengthen the frontier against the Persian invasion. By this road, from Pelusium to Memphis, Cambyses, king of Persia, and afterwards Alexander the Great, each marched to the conquest of Egypt; and by the same road the brave Johanan, at the head of the remnant of Judah, with his prisoner Jeremiah, fled from Nebuchadnezzar, nor stopped till they had crossed the marshes and entered the little town of Daphnæ, or Tahpenes, a town named after the queen of Shishank, the conqueror of Rehoboam.

Where the city of Thoum stands, as we have seen, a second valley runs

eastward from the Nile, and along this flows Necho's old Canal. This is forty miles long, and begins near the city of Bubastis, and ends in the lower Bitter Lakes, which, when thus made fresh, bore the name of the Crocodile Lakes. Between the Crocodile Lakes and the head of the Red Sea is the large upper Bitter Lake, and on the other side of the Crocodile Lakes is a natural drainage towards the Mediterranean, which runs into the marshes before spoken of, on the road between Daphnæ and Pelusium. Trajan's new Canal flowed along the same valley as Necho's Canal, but probably on rather higher ground, as it began from the Nile, near Babylon, forty miles higher up the river than the old canal, and reached, not the lower Bitter Lakes, but the upper Bitter Lake, which is a few feet higher, and thence entered the Red Sea through flood-gates, which gave their name to the town of Clysma, near Suez.

The road from Memphis to the Red Sea was not straight through the Desert, as travellers now pass from Cairo to Suez, but in a semicircle along the valleys, for the sake of water, and by the side of Trajan's Canal. From Memphis, as far as Thoum, it was the road already described. Thence it ran eastward, by the side of Necho's Canal, for twenty-four miles to Heroopolis, near the Crocodile Lakes; and thence eighteen miles to Serapion, between the Crocodile Lakes and the upper Bitter Lake. From Serapion to the Red Sea is only forty miles, but is fifty miles by the road which is turned away from the lake's side by the form of the ground. Travellers and caravans entering Egypt from the east, chiefly used this road, by Clysma, Heroopolis, and Thoum; as on the road from Palestine to Pelusium, they had to carry water with them during their six days' journey through the Desert.

Along this road, by Clysma and Heroopolis, Abraham and Joseph, and Jacob, no doubt, entered Egypt; and by the same road Moses led the Israelites out in safety. The valleys we have been describing are the Land of Goshen. During the last three thousand five hundred years the language spoken here has been Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, and lastly Arabic. Cities have been built and gone to ruin; the two canals have been dug and filled up again; but the surface of the country remains unchanged, except where, from time to time, the low sand-hills are shifted by the wind. The shifting of the sand, however, has made two important changes; it has lessened the quantity of water in the Pelusiac branch of the river, and has raised a bank, two feet high, which now separates the Bitter Lake from the Red Sea. These two waters seem originally to have been joined, and the Gulf of Suez, which was called the Bay of Heroopolis, reached almost to the city which gave it its name. In the Hebrew Scriptures the city is named Hahiroth, and that end of the Red Sea, Pi-Hahiroth, or *the Bay of Hahiroth*.

We will now follow Moses and the Israelites in their march out of Egypt, and though the names given to the cities in the Scriptures are not the same as those used in the Roman Itinerary, or Greek historians; and though in the case of any single town we might be uncertain, yet, when comparing with the map a series of five towns, we have no difficulty in recognizing them.

On comparing the Book of Exodus with the Book of Numbers, we see that Moses, after leaving the presence of Pharaoh, whom he had been to, perhaps in Memphis, returned to the Israelites at Rameses, one of the towns in which they were allowed to dwell, in which we recognise Heliopolis, from the two names having the same meaning, *The City of the Sun*. From Rameses the Israelites hastily departed, and marched to Succoth, which we clearly recognise in Scenæ, from these two names again having the same meaning, *The Tents*. This is a distance of about fourteen miles. At Succoth they spent their first night; and no doubt their countrymen who dwelt there joined them in their flight.

From Succoth they next day marched twenty-four miles, passing through a village which we only know by its Latin name, Vicus Judæorum, and encamped at Etham, or Bouthan, at the edge of the Desert, which can only be the Thoum of the Itinerary. Thoum was a place of some size, named after the Egyptian god Athom; and though some Jews may have dwelt there, we must suppose that this large body of now hostile people rather encamped in the neighbourhood than entered the gates.

At Etham the Israelites took the right-hand road, and turned towards Hahiroth, which is certainly Heroopolis, because each has given its name to the Gulf of Suez, which, by the Greek geographers, is called the Bay of Heroopolis, and by the Hebrew writers Pi-hahiroth, or the Bay of Hahiroth. They did not go to the city of Hahiroth, which stands on rising ground, on the left side of the valley; nor did they go straight forward to Baal-zephon, or Serapium, which stands between the Upper and Lower Lakes, and was the natural way out of Egypt; but they turned to the right, and encamped by the water-side, between Migdol, *The Tower*, and the sea, over against Baal-zephon. It was the march in this direction which seemed the fatal move—which made the Egyptians say, "They are entangled in the land; the Desert hath shut them in." It was at this encampment, also, that they were overtaken by the Egyptian chariots in advance of the rest of the army.

From this encampment, which may have been fifteen miles to the south of Hahiroth, and twenty-five to the north of Clysma, the Israelites were forced hastily to retreat; and they marched southward, murmuring against their leader and against their God, because they had not been left to serve the Egyptians rather than be brought out to die in the Desert. Had the Bitter Lake been separated from the Bay of Heroopolis as it is now, they would have been in no such fear; they might have marched near where Ptolemy's town of Arsinoe was afterwards built, or where the Roman town of Clysma stood, or where Suez now stands, each of which, in its turn, has been left by the waters of the Red Sea. But they saw no way of escape, and they marched all the fourth day southward, having the sea on one side and the low desert hills on the other. By night they reached the place where Clysma was afterwards built; and there, to their surprise, they saw a deliverance opened to them: "Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong

east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." For an hour or two the waters had the same boundaries as they have now. The Israelites walked over the bed of the sea on dry ground, with water on their right hand and on the left. The Egyptian chariots followed in the morning; but the wind fell, perhaps the tide rose, and the waves returned to the destruction of the pursuing army.

Since that time the shifting sands of the Desert have banked back the waters of the bay, and left that remarkable spot always dry; and every caravan from Cairo to Mecca passes over the spot where the Egyptian army was drowned. The sands have also choked up the two canals, on one of which Christian pilgrims had sailed even in the eighth century, in their way to the Holy Land, and by both of which the country was irrigated. The Land of Goshen, which the Israelites watered laboriously, like a garden, by means of wells and buckets, is again become a desert. By the sands also the Pelusiac branch of the river has been very much lessened; the ruins of the great towns of Bubastis and Pelusium can no longer be reached by vessels from the sea; and the waters of the Nile, which now flow in fewer and deeper channels, can no longer be forded between Memphis and Heliopolis.

October 4. To resume my journal. We broke up at an early hour from our encampment near the sea, and proceeding along the irregular sandy plain reached Ayûn Musa, "the Wells of Moses," about nine o'clock. Since leaving the green Nile we had seen nothing so refreshing as this little oasis; and yet it consisted but in a few patches of wild palm-trees and bushes, and one or two gardens, laboriously won from the Desert by force of irrigation by the briny spring, and protected from the sands by reed fences. One of these, surrounding its own white villa, had a most pleasing appearance in such a neighbourhood: we understood it belonged to a gentleman of Suez, who was in the habit of skimming across from time to time in his boat, a brief sail, to inspect the cultivation of his own vegetables. But the most characteristic object was a group of wild palms, nourished by one of these unpalatable springs: in its shade I pitched my tent, and breakfasted while the zemzemias were filled, there being no water all the way hence to Marah. The tall and graceful palms of Egypt would hardly acknowledge one of these rugged and stunted specimens of the same beautiful family, with its knotted trunk, untended branches, and dingy hue; deriving sustenance from the polluted salt-spring, instead of drinking the

glorious Nile, twisted and distorted by its struggles with the sandy desert-blast; yet we hailed it with more delight, and quitted it with more regret, than a region of groves elsewhere.

It may reasonably be presumed that the Jews halted at this spot to obtain water, though there may be some change in its appearance, the springs varying in number continually, as the desert wind fills them with drift-sand, and as they are restored by digging; at present there are about seven. The principal appears to be that beneath the palm-tree in the sketch, which contained a small quantity of dark-coloured brackish water; and as the camels could not descend into it, they were given to drink by the Bedouins from a wooden bowl. These wells also were formerly a watering-place for ships.

My companions, the Bedouins, now became objects of great interest to me. I had almost overlooked them when crouching in a circle near the hotel in Cairo, speaking with bated breath, and glancing uneasily to and fro with their restless black eyes: now abroad in their own wilderness, they are totally different in manner and bearing. They are mostly fine athletic fellows, graceful and even noble in their movements; a result derived from constant exercise, and the sense of untrammelled freedom; spare and sinewy, both from the sobriety of their habits, and the dry heat which parches up all superfluous flesh, and under which the traveller himself speedily undergoes something of that condensation of muscle which at home could only be produced by systematic training. Their complexion has a duskiness like that of the gipsies in our own country, and of those races who are exposed to all the chances and hardships of out-of-door life; and this peculiar tint serves to bring out, with the greater effect, the keen blackness of their flashing eyes, and the brilliant whiteness of their uniformly fine teeth. One cannot doubt, in looking at them, that they are of keen, quick intellect, and lively passions; but the fixed habits of ages have confined their ideas to a narrow range, from which they cannot escape. Within this circle of ideas they incessantly revolve, and display a subtlety and a refinement of cunning which, in a civilized state, would work marvels. They are as sagacious in tracking a

particular footmark of man or beast through the sand, even in, it is said, the confused and trampled track of a caravan, as a North American savage in following the trail of his foe through the tangled forest. In proportion to the paucity of their rational ideas is their love of the imaginative and the marvellous, of poems embodying the wars and loves of their desert existence; and they have a no less keen sense of the ludicrous, and love of practical jokes.

Umbarak, the chief of our little caravan, was a remarkably fine fellow, and on all occasions most obliging, as were indeed the rest. Small gratuities of coffee and eatables, which Komeh dispensed with great tact, kept them in constant good humour; they were always ready to assist in pitching the tent, and gathering wood for our fire. But there was one little fellow whom I came to regard, at last, with attachment; a limber slip of a boy about twelve years of age, delicate and spare, and apparently quite unequal to the fatigue and exposure of a long journey over the burning Desert. But one might see that from the lap of his Bedouin mother his life had been one of hardship and privation; his bones almost protruded through his soft and dusky skin, worn and rubbed white at the salient angles, with hard labour, like those of a negro; his meagre little frame told of frequent fastings, and scanty innutritious fare; yet never was eye more bright, tongue more lively, voice more sweetly feminine, spirits more gay, or activity more unwearied, than were those of little Salem. His entire clothing was a ragged tunic, a pair of sandals, and an old Bedouin handkerchief; and in his leathern belt was a small knife, and a pouch with materials for kindling a fire. Poor fellow! he flinched a little in the fierce heat of noon, and would then leap up behind on a camel, and with bending head, gasping mouth, and empty stomach, patiently endure the scorching sun on his unsheltered frame: I would then steer my camel along side of him, as by accident, and hand him a portion of my lunch; but the glowering keen eyes of the hungry Arabs were on the lad; they were round him in a moment, and with a smile I have seen him give away all but a few mouthfuls. At the evening camp, none so lively or so useful, now tending the camels, now running for

sticks and kindling the fire, all the while laughing and chattering; his merry voice has often roused me from sadness at the close of a weary day. He was very handy and useful to Komeh, and I desired him to feed him, but quite by stealth; for with the Bedouins there is a stern law of division, even to a fragment of biscuit; and no wonder, for they are all alike hungry, and hunger is bitterly selfish. I wondered what they lived on, and was often ashamed to sit down to my own dinner of comparative luxuries, with them around me. They eat, morning and evening, or when a halt gives them the opportunity, of a cake much resembling Scotch oat-cake: they carry about with them a small trough in which it is kneaded, and it is then baked hard over a fire made of sticks or dried camel-dung, on a spot of sand previously hollowed out. This cake is then divided, and constitutes nearly all their nourishment In viewing these their simple habits, preserved unchanged, we go ages back to the days of early Biblical story, thus reproduced before us. But the Bedouins do not always live so sparingly; when the rains make the face of the Desert to rejoice, and their flocks, spreading over the precious herbage, afford plenty of milk, they indulge liberally in that patriarchal luxury; while round the tents of the principal sheik, meat is often distributed in abundance; and then, as Burckhardt says, they feel like "kings in the Desert."

Towards noon we left the shade of the old palm, and launched out upon the scorching track. From a slight rise of sand-hills, a burning region spread out before us; an irregular plain of sand and gravel, extending from the foot of the mountains Er-Rahah, which support the great inland central plateau of the Desert, down to the shores of the sea; its surface is indented slightly by occasional wadies, or valleys, here merely irregular depressions in the level, caused by the passage of the winter floods from the mountains to the sea, and dotted by scanty tufts of coarse grass and withered gritty-looking shrubs, which the camels in passing generally caught at with avidity, but sometimes refused. After the continuance of rains, however, these valleys freshen up, and afford pasturage to the flocks of the neighbouring small tribe of Terâbîn Arabs, whose encampment lies

beneath a singular and conspicuous peak on the left, called Tâset Sudr, or the Cup of Sudr, from a fountain there. The shipless sea appears on our right, and the dark mountains of Attaka beyond, with the opening of Wady Tawarik. In one of these wadies we encamped at sunset.

October 5. Off before sunrise, commencing the labours of a most toilsome day. Plain, mountain, and wady in a blaze of white heat, "lie like a load on the weary eye," and seem as if they had just passed, all palpitating, through a fiery crucible. Truly this beginning of their Desert course must have appalled the Israelites —we picture them toiling over the burning expanse—here, too, we learn that they were destitute of water, a fearful privation. In the afternoon we leave this wearisome plain, and ascend the first range of the white limestone hills, and get peeps of the mountain region beyond. Winding among these hills, at sunset we reached the fountain Howârah, and encamped, at a short distance beyond, under the shelter of the two tufts of wild palm-bushes which are represented in the accompanying sketch.

Returning to the fountain while the tent was being pitched, I felt what a charm might belong to the dreariest track and the most insignificant object, if imagination can but bring back the scenes of earliest historic time. After the two days' broiling since we left Suez, it was easy to picture to ourselves the feelings with which the famished host would approach the welcome fountain; mothers pressing with their dying children to gain but a drop of the precious supply, the anguish of their disappointment, and their despair,—too strong for faith, even after recent experience of the power of their God,—and incredulous surprise at the miracle giving place to grateful thanksgiving. It would form a noble subject for a painter endued with high powers of expression. As, absorbed in such ideas, I stood alone by the brink of the small oval pool which occupies the centre of a mound of travertine, gradually formed in the course of time, by depositions from its petrifying spring, and was gazing into the little basin of dark water, one of the Arabs came down to give drink to his camel, and at the same time to obtain

a supply. This rather surprised me, as some have asserted that even camels * refused the water on account of its bitterness ; and in my then imaginative mood, I took it for granted the water was not potable, at least by human beings ; but seeing this, I stepped down and drank a palm-ful, certainly without noticing anything bitter, which might possibly arise from the nauseousness of those potations to which I had become used since leaving Suez. In the course of the evening I suffered from thirst, and the water in the skins having all the appearance, and somewhat of the taste, of a strong decoction of rhubarb and Russia leather, I sent down to the spring for a draught. Before drinking it, however, I asked the Arab whether it was bad, and whether they were accustomed to drink it ; and their reply was, that it was considered " mush taib," or very bad, and that they did not drink it if they could get other water. It looked so clear, however, that I determined to venture, and after tasting it again, took long and repeated draughts, and was certainly unable to discover anything peculiarly nauseous about it, though I have reason to believe it disagreed with me afterwards ; or at any rate, that it produced somewhat inconvenient results, of a nature that may be inferred from Dr. Olin's statement, that it resembled to him " a weak solution of Epsom salts." The last-mentioned writer declares it " too bitter to be drunken without producing a degree of disgust ;" but what water in the Desert is not ? When the worthy Doctor proceeds, however, to make agreement with his sensations the test of another man's moral honesty, as he does in the case of one of his own party, who, like myself, could discover nothing particularly bad about the water, and says that " no one can tell how far the strong wish to keep clear of the necessity of believing a miracle *may operate even upon his palate*," we take leave to remind him that the converse of this may be equally possible. Dr. Robinson, who both admits the site, and would, of course, contend for miraculous influence in the transformation of the water, remarks, " Its taste is unpleasant, saltish, and somewhat bitter ; but we

* See Stephens

could not perceive that it was very much worse than that of 'Ayûn Mûsa; perhaps because we were not yet connoisseurs in bad water. The Arabs, however, pronounce it bitter, and consider it as the worst water in all these regions. Yet when pinched they drink of it, and our camels also drank freely."

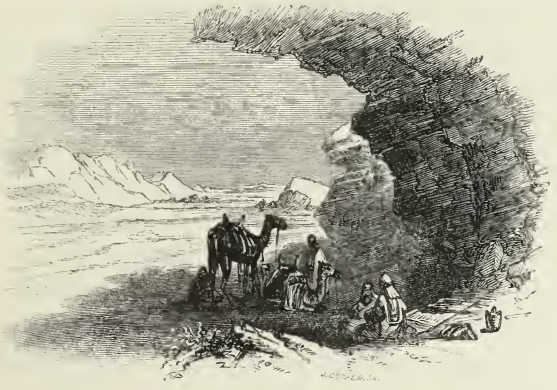
There are, below the fountain, a considerable number of the Ghŭrkŭd, which are often found in similar situations. This shrub bears small red berries, rather acid in taste, and refreshing enough in a parched wilderness; but neither this, nor any other known shrub or tree, has the property of correcting the bad qualities of the water, in the sense in which the Biblical narrative requires us to suppose, nor are the Bedouins acquainted with such a process. In the lower part of the Desert I never tasted water which I should not elsewhere have rejected with disgust. The admixture of brandy seems to render it even more disagreeable, though probably less pernicious: with tea and coffee its bad taste is somewhat less offensive. In general I endeavoured to abstain from it as much as possible.

October 6. This proved a very interesting, but fatiguing day. I left the encampment at an early hour, and reached the edge of Wady Ghurundel—a considerable valley, filled with wild tamarisk and other bushes—in about two hours. Here we came to a stand, undecided, for some time, whether we should proceed by the direct route to Sinai followed by Dr. Robinson, or pass down the valley to the sea, making a circuit, and regaining it in Wady Useit. I had a great wish to take the latter course, but could obtain no certain information respecting the distance to the springs, which have been usually considered identical with Elim, the next station of the Israelites beyond Marah. Dr. Robinson reported them, on the authority of his Arabs, at half-an-hour's distance, while all mine declared it to be at two hours'; and Ibrahim, my interpreter, boldly affirmed that Robinson's book "lied." This was discouraging; but I determined to find out for myself; and thus, sending on the main body, with directions to halt and wait for us in Wady Useit, I took with me Umbarak and Ibrahim, and sheepish enough they looked when in just half-an-hour, as it happened, we reached the principal spring.

It wells out at the foot of a sandstone rock, forming a small pool of clear water, bordered by sedges, and looked highly refreshing after 'Ayûn Mûsa and Howara: there was even, delightful sight! a little grass, and birds were hopping about, enjoying the rare luxury. The water, trickling off, pursues its way some distance down the valley, forming a reedy marsh, interspersed with thickets of bushes and dwarf palm-trees, and a considerable quantity of tamarisk, with other shrubs, as represented in the illustration; and as there are also considerable masses of similar vegetation above this point, there are, probably, several other springs which nourish it. Altogether it was a reviving sight in the thirsty Desert; and I saw no spot which could so well correspond with the wells and palm-trees of Elim, through the entire route to Wady Feiran.* Filling our water-skins we proceeded down the valley, encountering, here and there, a few straggling Arabs of the Terabin, with their flocks, and passing more water and vegetation. In rather above an hour the blue sea peeped in through the western opening of the Wady, on the left of which, like a portal, rises a noble mass of slaty stone, deeply hollowed out, and throwing a broad, cool shadow into the sandy valley—truly "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It might be an unfounded impression, but there seemed to be a physiognomy (as Bulwer says of houses) about this remarkable object; and I felt, if the host of the Israelites really occupied this valley, and the plain by the sea at its mouth, no station could have been more central,

* Dr. Lepsius, however, considers that this is in reality "Marah;" and that the small spring of Howara, previously described, is too insignificant to have been selected as a halting-place, when this, the more copious supply, was so near. But, on the other hand, it is, perhaps, worthy of remark, that after their three days' previous march from 'Ayûn Mûsa, Howara would be *the first water* reached by the Israelites, and where they would naturally halt for a supply in their extremity before proceeding further. Moreover, the water of Ghurundel, better than even that of Marah, could not have proved particularly nauseous, to people fainting from thirst, far less undrinkable, as the narrative seems to infer. And, although we cannot estimate a day's march of the Israelites with any great precision, it is improbable, that, encumbered as they were, they should have performed fifteen or sixteen miles a day, as they must have done to have reached Wady Ghurundel the third day of their march, the distance being six miles beyond Howara.

imposing, or convenient for the head-quarters of the great leader than this rock. After lingering awhile to indulge this fancy in its



welcome shade, I emerged on the small plain which bends round from the mouth of the wady to the base of Djebel Hummam. Here it struck me, at the moment, that a portion of the great host of the Israelites might possibly have taken the route by the sea, and thus have entered the wady at its mouth; but as there is but one small watering-place, Abu Suweirah, on the way, it is more probable that the main body would keep the track by Marah.

The small plain at the end of Wady Ghurundel* we had now to traverse, was, to all appearance, perfectly sterile and stony, and as we had no inducement to make a circuit by the border of the sea, we took a direct course towards the mouth of Wady Useit, keeping near the desolate limestone mountains, and suffering severely, notwithstanding the sea-breeze, from the unsheltered plain and fiery heat. Djebel Hummam, bold and striking, dropped its huge mountain-mass sheer into the sea beyond the plain, and effectually blocked up further progress along the shore: the Israelites *must*, therefore, have regained the main track by proceeding up the difficult Wady Useit.

I had by this time discovered that Umbarak was a very bad

* Milman, speaking of Elim, says, "In this delightful resting-place they remained *a month*," and it is not till after this that we first read of any *miraculous* supply.

guide ; and at the mouth of this wady he would certainly have led us astray into a small side valley, had I not, by a close examination, ascertained the true pass. Wady Useit was the first ravine we had entered as yet in the wilderness. Figure a narrow bed of sand, sometimes but wide enough to admit a camel or two abreast, and in places expanding a little, serpentining between two towering walls of limestone, many hundred feet high, of the most dazzling whiteness, which, occasionally meeting beneath, scarcely admitted a difficult passage through its terrific jaws. Not a patch of verdure ; but here and there a bright green caper-plant, with its beautiful flower, starting from a fissure of the crags : not a breath of air stirring : the sun poured down its beams vertically into this gulf, casting, at wide intervals, from some overhanging projection, a little patch of shadow, which seemed the only refuge from being smitten dead by the reflected heat and fiery glare concentrated upon our devoted caravan. The groans of the distressed camels echoed fearfully among the solitary cliffs ; the Arabs suffered severely, but, as usual, in silence ; and, for myself, gasping and exhausted, I seemed to feel as if my only chance of life depended on a speedy escape from the depths of this fearful chasm. Fancy then the crowded host of the Israelites working their way through such a spot. Never did I watch more impatiently for anything than for the end of this gorge. At length its sides

diverged, and disclosed a few wild palm-trees, and the flitting figures of our Arabs, who hailed our reappearance with loud and

joyful shouts; and we soon found that our trusty Komeh had arranged everything for a repast, which was never more welcome to ourselves than in this little oasis, which proved as delightful a halting-place as it must have done to the Israelites of old.

In consequence of the fatigue he had undergone in this deviation from the regular track, Umbarak, our sheik, thought this a good opportunity to put in a claim for a regular supply of provisions, which he averred was customary, and which claim he backed by the declaration that his stock was exhausted. As the admission of this claim, which, in truth, had no foundation, would have led the whole party to make me their provider, I flatly refused, notwithstanding his piteous appeal; but as he had made an unusual circuit, I told Komeh to give him a meal of biscuit, with the strict understanding that it would only be repeated on similar occasions. The rest of the Arabs watched the issue of the manœuvre with interest, and were obviously disappointed at its unsatisfactory result: as some consolation, however, I promised to give them a lamb when we reached Wady Feiran.

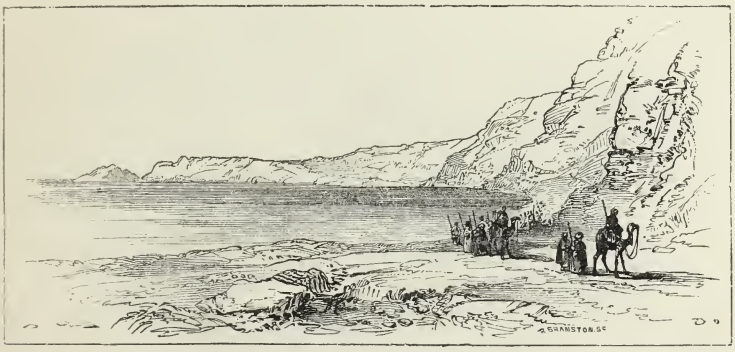
In the afternoon we proceeded on our way over an irregular plain, having on the right the dark rugged mass of Jebel Hummam, and far on the left the broken ridges of El Tih. Here we first caught sight of the grand outline of Mount Serbal, the object of our pilgrimage. At sunset we halted for the night under the lee of a sand-hill, a little beyond a singular heap of stones, tricked out with tributary fragments of rags, which the Arabs regarded as the tomb of a female saint, Oreis Themmân, or Bride of Themman.

October 7. I had felt much interest in my endeavours to trace the route of the Israelites yesterday, and now looked forward with pleasure to continuing them by making a similar deviation from the direct route to Sinai, which we quitted early this morning, at the junction of Wady Shubeikeh, or Net, and Wady Humr; which, here uniting, are called Wady Taiyibeh, which valley we descended to the sea, instead of proceeding by Wady Humr to Sarabut el Khadim.

The sandstone mountains, increasing in altitude gradually all the way up to the granite ranges of Sinai and Serbal, are here bold and

stern, and give somewhat of a rude grandeur to Wady Taiyibeh. I could neither see nor hear of any living springs ; but there is a considerable quantity of wild verdure, both soil and nourishment being given by deposits from the winter rains, which sweep down the deep bed of the valley in a powerful torrent. We reached the narrow, desolate, shadeless plain, at the mouth of the Wady, in somewhat less than two hours : from Wady Humr it runs out to a point called Ras Abu Zelima. This now forsaken spot Dr. Lepsius considers to have been the station whence the copper-ore, from the mines of Sarabut el Khadim and Wady Maghara, was conveyed, in the palmy days of the supremacy of Egypt, across the Red Sea to that country, both before and after the Exodus. He founds this view upon its obviously sheltered and comparatively safe anchorage. The "twelve wells," dug, as he contends, to supply the want of natural springs, "and three score palm-trees" of Elim, he places at the mouth of Wady Taiyibeh, or, as he considers it, Wady Shubeikeh. This view of the position of Elim seems very doubtful, and Dr. Lepsius, who did not visit the spot, is totally mistaken in his assertion, that this is the first place on the route of the Israelites where palm-trees are met with in considerable numbers. The wells, if they ever existed, are filled up. Passing a small Arab tomb we came down to the sea, which here, bending inwards, almost touches the mountains, forming a small cove or bay ; before us, at a short distance, a headland projected into the water, casting a patch of shadow on the wet sand. I hastened forward to profit by its coolness : the transparent green waves broke grandly at our feet ; the fresh glittering spray almost reached us : we breathed another air from that of the dusty Desert. I spread a carpet on the damp sand, and, listening to the grand roar of the sea, revelled, for a short time, in the exquisite beauty that nature often unfolds in her most solitary places. But there were none to participate, and momentary rapture soon gave way to a melancholy sense of isolation, in the heart of the wilderness, far from all I loved. This, and the gradual diminution of my patch of shadow by the tyrannous sun, soon hurried me again on my solitary way.

Rambling along the beach I amused myself with hunting for shells, till brought up by another headland, which the sea prevented me from passing. Over this the camels pursued a track a little further in; but at two places had to be forced through the water, although the tide was slightly on the ebb; in fact, except at quite low-water, a numerous caravan could not get round. At length the mountains retire, and an extensive plain succeeds, bounded on the left by high dark ranges, which sweep round again towards the sea further on, and through which lay our direct course towards Sinai. Here, probably enough, after their difficult passage round the headlands, the Israelites "encamped by the sea."



The plain we now entered extends far along the shore of the Red Sea; it is by Robinson considered as the Desert of Sin; Lepsius, however, extends this district as far as to the Serbal, considering the derivation of Sin and Sinai to be the same: he regards the difficult passage by the sea-coast just described, as the geographical division of the Deserts of Shur and Sin. The Israelites had choice of two or three roads hence to Wady Feiran, as a reference to the Map will show: but it is every way probable, if not absolutely certain, that they must have penetrated the mountain district by the same direct course usually followed at the present day—by the mouth of Wady Shellal.

In crossing this dreary plain, from neglect on the part of the Arabs, the water gave out, and my brief privation, ere a fresh

supply could be obtained, gave me a sufficient insight into what must be all the intolerable agonies of protracted thirst in the wilderness. Happily a few half-dry citrons, the last of our stock from Cairo, were found at the bottom of one of the bags, which, at any other time, would have been rejected with disgust, but which were now masticated with desperate relish, and, for a while, relieved my suffering with their acid though bitter juices. Two of the camels were sent to the spring, El Murkhah, at the foot of the mountains which bound the plain on the left,—a noted watering-place on this lower route to Sinai, and the only one, indeed, from Wady Ghurundel to Feiran.

We saw here numerous desert-partridges, or "quails," of which a miraculous supply was afforded to the Israelites on this very spot: several gazelles also, those graceful tenants of the wilderness, lightly bounded through the rocks and shrubs, as we advanced; and the Arabs gave chase, but, as usual, without success. Before sunset we had crossed the plain and entered the mountains by Wady Shellal, which we ascended, into Wady Buderah, encamping there for the night, in the heart of a bolder and more romantic region than any we had hitherto passed through, and joyful to have escaped from the lower Desert, with its monotonous aspect and fiery

heat. We had the good fortune to obtain here, *for the first time since leaving Cairo*, cold fresh water, supplied by a spring high up the mountain, and a small quantity of milk, luxuries beyond all price, which rejoiced our evening bivouac, and are well worthy of being chronicled in a journal of Desert life.

October 8. On our way at an early hour, ascending Wady Buderah, at the extremity of which we came to a short, but very steep pass, called the Nukb Buderah, partly built up with rough stones, and which the camels found so difficult that the rocks resounded with their cries; it was only by removing their loads in the steeper parts of the ascent, that they were ultimately enabled to accomplish it: in these cases, the animal, usually so patient, drops on his knees, and groans with distress, opens wide his lips, gnashes his teeth, and utters, in his uncouth way, loud guttural growls, the only appeal he can make against the injustice of a too heavy load; and till it is removed, all attempts to raise him by blows only serve to increase his impatience to fury; but once relieved and on his legs again, he paces forward for hours, with the same full, placid eye and tranquil expression as before.*

We had now entered the point of transition from the sandstone to the granite region. There was a stern oppressive grandeur in the long, narrow, winding valleys, with their dark and awful walls towering abrupt on either hand, without a sound or sign of living thing; no vegetation relieved the sandy depths of the defile, except the solitary acacia-tree, which, though rugged and fenced with long sharp spines, by which my feet and hands have often been torn, I learned to love for its delicate bright yellow blossoms, and still more for their exquisitely fragrant scent, which I think unsurpassed by that of any other flower, and which, especially in the Desert, is worth a whole parterre. And ever beneath these solitary trees, a patch of black ashes shows that here the wandering Bedouin loves to pitch his fleeting camp; its thorny branches he collects for his

* Dr. Lepsius supposes that in consequence of the difficulties of the Nukb Buderah, the Israelites may have taken a circuitous track by the gorge of Wady Sittereh into Wady Mukatteb; probably they passed by both roads.

evening fire ; he reposes in its shade, and revels in the sweetness that breathes from its perfumed though scanty foliage. Here and there is seen a tuft of long wild broom, the retem, or juniper of the Bible, beneath which, in ancient days, prophet and patriarch have rested ; and to him who shall pore, in busy idleness, among the fine sand, many minute plants and flowers, before overlooked, prove that even here God has not left himself without a witness, sad and desolate as is the aspect of the monotonous wilderness.

But though, in penetrating these solemn defiles, one feels as if it were the first time that their recesses had ever been explored, yet we soon perceived that others had been before us, and had left memorials, although rude and hasty, of their brief pilgrimage : wherever the smooth face of a rock offered the temptation, appeared some of those mysterious Sinaitic characters which, till lately, had baffled the research of the learned, and whose writers are even now unascertained. It was about here that I expected to find the entrance to Wady Maghara, which contains some remarkable hieroglyphics, and where I had been told by Dr. Lepsius that I should see on the rocks a portrait of king Cheops, the founder of the great pyramid. Such a memorial, in the heart of this wilderness, might well possess a mysterious attraction, and I was proportionately anxious to see it. But when I asked Umbarak and my Arabs to halt at the entrance of this Wady, to my utter surprise, all the answer I received was, " Maghara ma fish ;" There is no Maghara ! not one of them had ever heard of such a place in the entire peninsula !

This was provoking enough ; to be in the vicinity of the most interesting object of the whole route, and to miss it from the stupidity of one's guide, if, indeed, it were not an affected ignorance to prevent me from stopping, which I at first suspected it was, and that the savoury thought of the lamb expected at Wady Feiran, upon which a hungry Bedouin might feed his imagination for days before, was hurrying them along, and rendering even an hour's delay insupportable. Internally I resolved that their mouths should water in vain ; but I began to doubt at length, whether they really knew where they were, as this is not the usual road taken by the Tor Arabs

from the Convent to Suez. Arriving at the mouth of a side valley, which appeared to me to answer the position in the Map, I came to a halt, in the midst of a scene of loud uproar, the servants abusing the Arabs, and Komeh being, with some difficulty, prevented from beating our incapable sheik, who kept on reiterating, with true Arab pertinacity, "Maghara ma fish."

Here, while a second breakfast was getting ready, under the shade of a rock covered with Sinaitic inscriptions, I walked up the wady, looking out on the left hand for vestiges of the hieroglyphics; but having ascended for some distance without success, and being uncertain of the locality, and already tired with my previous walk, I returned in a furious perspiration to the rock, and was in vain trying to swallow my vexation with my breakfast, when a solitary Arab was descried pacing down the valley: we hailed him, and speedily found that here was an end of "Maghara ma fish"—we *were* in the wady, after all, and he could conduct us to the place "all the travellers went to see."

Accordingly, taking Ibrahim, with a zemzemia and portfolio, in a somewhat better mood, but yet very tired, we regained the *same spot* where I had turned back, and then commenced a ten minutes' clamber up the left-hand rocks, very difficult and almost inaccessible: the sun beat fiercely upon them; the perspiration rolled down my face in streams, and I drank desperately from the water-bottle, at the risk of dropping dead. At length we stood under the shadow of what appeared to be the mouth of the mine, nearly choked up with drift-sand; and the Arab, with sparkling eyes, pointed to the rocks, and intimated that it was there, and with a look intended to be submissive and fascinating, was just beginning to articulate "backshish;" when, with ugly misgivings and in my loudest tones, I demanded the hieroglyphics. Vacantly he shook his head; but Ibrahim, by a roundabout process, explaining that I was looking for something chiselled in the rock, he suddenly remembered, tapped me on the shoulder, and making us leap down, with extreme difficulty, into the mouth of the cave, he pointed exultingly to some half-dozen marks in the roof, evidently made by the miners; and at that

moment felt, no doubt, the piastres gliding sweetly into his leathern pouch. But his wishes were not met in the way he expected: "The hieroglyphics, the hieroglyphics, !" I faintly screamed; "Ma fish, ma fish," he doggedly replied. Mad with vexation, I uttered a loud and piteous groan of disappointment; and Ibrahim, seizing a huge fragment of rock, which might have served one of Homer's heroes, in uncontrollable fury, sent it thundering at his head; in dodging to avoid it, the poor fellow cut his foot, and came out hopping and limping, and striving, in vain, with an exhibition of his bleeding limb, to turn the edge of our wrath. But the provocation was *unique*; and at half a hint from me, the furious Egyptian would have brained him where he stood, and left his ill-omened carcase to be disputed by the hyænas and vultures. I worked off my excitement by abusing him freely; but by the time we got down again I was spent, and felt as if I could have sunk into the sand. And had it then come to this, that after a double attempt and all this fatigue, I was to go away without seeing the face of old Cheops after all? Thus muttering I advanced mechanically a few paces higher up the valley, the Arab still shaking his head, and the eternal "Ma fish" still ringing in my ears, when lo! perched up within a hundred yards of the very spot we had gained at the risk of our necks, yet concealed from thence by some rocky projections, behold the large sculptured tablets, with numerous figures, grinning down at us, as it were, like Efrits, and asking whether we would like to come up again and have a look at them, or whether we had got enough of hieroglyphic hunting already! And truly, at that moment, I almost wished they had never existed. Ibrahim groaned when he beheld them, and casting a withering look at the delinquent Arab, followed me once more up the rocks; and by the time we had reached the tablets our last drop of water was gone; and not one of the wretched miners who laboured four thousand years ago in the adjacent cavern, could have been more utterly exhausted than ourselves.

So much time had been lost in this exciting and fatiguing chase, that it was now high noon, and although sheltered by an umbrella, I could not long have endured the heat upon the shade-

less rocks, which must apologize for the unquestionably imperfect manner in which I have copied these very curious and remarkable tablets. I looked at them with a feeling which more than repaid me for my previous chagrin and toil. It seemed wonderful, and almost incredible, to find here, in so distant a spot, high up on the side of the mountain, sculptured records of so remote an antiquity, the principal part of them being in a fair state of preservation ; and by the precision, and even spirit, of their style, testifying to the high civilization of Egypt, at a period when the utmost limits of the historical, recedes into the fabulous and mysterious obscurity of unrecorded time.

The principal tablet (represented in the engraving) is in far better preservation than the rest, owing, apparently, to the shelter of the adjacent piece of rock. It stands at some height from the ground beneath; and, there is no doubt, was accessible by a path from the mouth of the cavern before mentioned, which was, probably, the entrance to the copper-mine, once worked by a colony of Egyptians, like that in the neighbourhood of Sarabut el Khadim. It represents the conquest of the surrounding country by an early Egyptian king, whose name appears on the cartouche, or oval ; the word " Tau," hieroglyphically written by the hand, bird, and crowns on each side of the principal actor, signifying mountain lands, and the conqueror's title, Lord of Battles, given (or gifted) with life for ever, appearing in the other emblems. The three figures are different personifications of the same hero, and it is remarkable that the centre one bears the *double crown*, i. e., of the upper and lower Egyptian kingdoms, proving that Thebes, at this early period, was under the Memphite monarchs. Some part is defaced, but might possibly be made out by a good Egyptian scholar on closer examination. Enough, however, is here presented to give the reader a fair idea of the general character and import of the principal tablet.

On a line with this are others, but far more broken and decayed ; and of these I profess only to give a very general idea. The first represents Suphis, Chofo, or Kneph Chofo, also in the act of beating down an enemy ; while Thoth, the god of writing, stands by with a

dog-head sceptre. In the left-hand corner, above the king, was what I conjecture to be an eagle, much defaced, significative of Providence: the title on the left of the cartouche is "Priest." Beyond the intervening partition, on which are some defaced hieroglyphics, is another tablet, with a cartouche of a king, and similar hieroglyphic titles. The cartouche of Suphis is the same as that in the great pyramid, of which he was the builder.

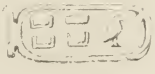
Tablet No. 3, is a similar subject, bearing the cartouche of an unplaced king, with the usual titles, armed with the mace, (which appears in all the tablets to be the weapon used,) holding, either by the hair, or, perhaps, by an ornamental head-dress, a bearded opponent,—the usual mode of depicting the Asiatic enemies of the Egyptians: over the standard appears a *double* crown.

Besides these, there are others, of later date, which I could not, under my circumstances of exhaustion, fully examine. To the practised eye of an Egyptian antiquary I doubt not that Wady Maghara would prove an important subject of examination, no less than the temple and monuments of Sarabut el Khadim,* on the upper road to Sinai. Both indeed were visited by Dr. Lepsius.

Is it not almost too marvellous for belief that these tablets existed before the Exodus of the Israelites, when Moses, with all his host, actually passed, beyond question, down the valley Mokatteb, or a short distance below, on his way towards Wady Feiran and Sinai? They must be regarded, I presume, as among the most ancient sculptures in the world; and yet it is evident that when they were executed the arts were by no means in their infancy, but that centuries, at least, had elapsed since their unknown and remote origin.

In a state of great exhaustion we reached the bed of the valley. We proceeded to regain our camels, jesting at our guide, and parry-

* This is not far hence, but by a very difficult path. Dr. Lepsius seems to have explained all the mystery that has so long hung over this place; the upright monuments, similar to tombs, being, according to him, stelæ, or tablets, somewhat similar in import to those just described: he also remarked what escaped other travellers, viz., the immense quantity of ore heaped up about the place. This, as well as Wady Maghara, was a mining colony of the Egyptians



ing his insinuating appeals for backshish, by asking what he meant to give us for qualifying him as a cicerone. In answer to this he put forth his foot, which was but little hurt; and with a small present we dismissed him happy and contented. We had now the laugh against our stupid sheik; and as we proceeded towards Wady Mokatteb, ironically twitted him with "Maghara ma fish," till he was fain to drop in the rear, quite crest-fallen, whilst Ibrahim retailed our disasters in the wady to the great amusement of the lively Arabs.

In a short time after leaving the mouth of Wady Maghara the valley expands into a small plain, and again suddenly contracts: it is here, on the right-hand rocks, that the largest collection of the Sinaitic writings is to be found; they occur, indeed, in very considerable quantity, and must have been the work of a large body of men. Wady Mokatteb is the name given to the spot.

The drawing will convey a correct idea both of the characters and of the rude attempts to pourtray camels, and other animals—perfectly

childish efforts, and widely different from the finished works of Egyptian art that we had just been inspecting. As far as their quantity and frequent occurrence on this lower road to Sinai may be taken in evidence, it would certainly appear that Wady Feiran was far more frequented than Sinai itself; but whether Mount Serbal was, at the period of their execution, considered to be the real Horeb, we are, perhaps, not sufficiently advanced in the study of these mysterious inscriptions to decide; the presumption in favour of such a supposition certainly appears very strong.

I have already alluded to the obscurity that still appears to hang over the origin of these inscriptions. They were first, as Robinson informs us, mentioned about A. D. 535, by Cosmas, who supposed them to be the work of the ancient Hebrews; and even states that certain Jews, who had read them, had explained them to him as noting the "journey of such an one, out of such a tribe, on such a year and month;" just as even now, on the road to Mecca, similar inscriptions are to be seen, the work of Moslem pilgrims. This view was afterwards taken by Clayton, Bishop of Clogher, in 1753; but without any one being as yet able to decipher the writings. It is but quite lately that Professor Beer, of Leipsic, after laborious study, has been able to do this: he pronounces them to be of Christian origin,—probably the work of pilgrims to Mount Sinai. Christian monograms and crosses, as well as Greek inscriptions demonstrably older, as Dr. Lepsius affirms, tend to prove this. The peculiar character itself approximates most nearly to the Cufic, and is supposed by Beer to have appertained to the language formerly spoken by the Nabathæans of Petra, and other parts of the peninsula, (afterwards superseded by the Arabic,) and of which these inscriptions are almost the only existing traces. Dr. Lepsius agrees with Professor Beer as to the nature of the inscriptions, but regards them as the work of a *Christian pastoral people*, and not of mere passing pilgrims; an opinion seemingly borne out by their number, their often elaborate, though rude, character, and the remote spots in which they are sometimes met with. It is somewhat singular that there should be so many of them at this particular place;

and some could only have been executed by means of a ladder, or, at least, by clambering up the face of the rocks. They occur hence continually, though at intervals, all the way to Wady Feiran, and up to the very top of the Serbal: there are also several on the upper road to Sinai which, doubtless, also originally led to Feiran; but there is scarcely an instance about Mount Sinai itself, and none whatever upon that mountain; nor, with a single exception at Petra, have any been as yet met with anywhere else in the peninsula, which is, to say the least, most singular.

The opinion of the German scholars is now pretty generally embraced; yet some recur to the old theory, that the inscriptions are in reality the work of the Israelites during their sojourn in the wilderness. The Rev. Mr. Forster, well known as the author of a work on the "Arabians," is, it is said, now engaged in an elaborate essay on the subject of this and other obscure inscriptions throughout the world. He is *said to have translated more than a hundred of the inscriptions—records of various incidents in the Exodus.* The one in this character, in the quarries of Toura, near Cairo, whence the pyramids were built, alluded to by Robinson, but of which Lepsius seems to doubt the existence, is said to be a complaint of the Israelites during their cruel toils in Egypt: wonderful indeed, if true!

The irregular jagged peaks of Mount Serbal rose upon us soon after leaving Wady Maghara, in passing across an irregular tableland; and from no point does it present itself with more imposing grandeur, in a stern and desolate region—the most stern, lonely, and apparently inaccessible, no mountain in the peninsula can compare with it. From this high land we descended by a somewhat rugged pass into Wady Feiran, the great drain of all this part of the peninsula, descending hence to the Red Sea. From the Wilderness of Sin, as before remarked, the Israelites might possibly have advanced by the sea and up this valley; but more probably by the shorter and more mountainous road we had pursued from Wady Shellal; and thus, at the junction of these two roads, we were again, to a certainty, upon their track. We encamped in the middle

of the wady, which here presents none of that fertility which it displays higher up.

October 8. On our way early; the Bedouins stimulated by the savoury anticipation of the promised lamb, and I by the expectation of meeting with the finest scenery in the peninsula. Several hours passed, however, before any signs appeared of that verdure for which our souls longed even "as a hart for the waterbrooks;" for it is impossible to convey any idea of the feeling of utter weariness that grows upon the solitary wanderer, as day by day he penetrates further into the heart of this great and terrible wilderness, as ravine succeeds to ravine, each more forsaken and desolate than the last, with its bed of sand or gravel, overhung with mountains, which, in their convulsed forms, their bald and awful abruptness, their arid colouring of brown, black, white, red, and yellow, glaring eternally under the same fiery sun, seem like a portion of some early world untenanted by man, some blasted planet visited in the wildness of our dreams, where human foot has never trodden, and human life has neither object nor subsistence. The mechanical and silent footfall of the camel, pacing noiselessly from morn to night among the voiceless crags, lulls us, in the absence of all external signs of life, into a state of reverie, sometimes humorous, sometimes sad, which is not without its charms; Laborde says that he was unwillingly aroused from its fascinations. The mind falls back upon itself, and delights to recall the events, in all their vividness, of that early period when the Israelitish host threaded these weary defiles—to represent to itself every incident of their toilsome march, and the feeling of horror and amazement that must have daunted their spirits, as they felt themselves transported from verdant Egypt into the heart of a solitude, of which we may indeed say,

> "So lonely 't is, that God himself
> Scarce seemeth there to be:"

Or, it may be, glancing to its own recollections, the memory awakens, in preternatural vividness, or painful intensity, passages of old joys and sorrows, which have long slept amidst the din and movement of

an active life, which is here cut off; burdens again the soul with the pressure

> "Of that weight which it would cast
> Aside for ever;"

or binds it, during these solitary hours, as upon a wheel of fire, to the torture of those uneasy thoughts, which, like evil spirits, delight to visit us in solitude.

But a sudden change awaited us; about noon, at a turn of the road, the scene that burst upon us was more like the dream of a poet, than any reality in this arid wilderness. The cliffs on either hand still towered, bare and perpendicular, to an immense height; but instead of a gravelly valley, collecting and condensing the fiery rays of the sun, arose, as by enchantment, tufted groves of palm and fruit trees, producing on my mind a more vivid impression of romantic luxuriance than had been left by anything I had yet beheld in the East. Highly as my expectations had been raised, they were more than sustained by this startling and singular scenery. This entrance of the valley of Feiran is called El Hesue, and is supposed by Dr. Lepsius to be the Rephidim of Moses, on which I shall offer some remarks further on. Proceeding further, this rich vegetation almost ceases, till, in about half-an-hour, we approached the old city of Feiran. Some time before arriving there, the attention is attracted by the ruins of a deserted town on the left-hand side of the valley, and afterwards by a multitude of those singular *living graves*, as they may well be termed, which were once tenanted by the hermit-population of this valley. They consist of small natural orifices, or artificial excavations, with a flat stone nearly covering the top, just large enough for a single tenant, and resembling more the lair of the wild beast than the abode of human beings: they are scattered, in great numbers, over the surrounding mountains.

The hoary ruins of the old convent now appeared on a low spur of mountain, just where Wady Aleyat, coming down from the Serbal, opens up a noble view of its stupendous cliffs. We passed on, and in a few minutes struck upon a stream of running water,

purling through an overhanging covert of Turfeh, or "manna-trees;" following this, we were in a few moments beneath the shade of that unequalled verdure which extends far up the narrow valley of Feiran.

One of the great pleasures of wandering about with a tent, in a settled climate, is the power it gives you of cultivating a closer intimacy with nature, of halting when and where you will: wherever the aspect of the place best strikes your fancy, you can raise your temporary home without let or hinderance; under the group of trees, or by the sheltering rock whose physiognomy best pleases you, and where, from your canvass door, you open the finest view. On the edge of this palm-forest nature had already prepared a halting-place for the lonely and worn visitor of her most hidden haunts, and among the infinite variety of her fanciful creations, few could be more wild or marvellous than this.

Here, in the heart of that terrible wilderness of rock and sand, of the stunted bush and nauseous scanty pool, I pitched my tent beneath a tall group of palms, which bent shelteringly over it: the spring coming down the valley, and rippling among green sedges, formed a small transparent basin at the foot of a fragment of lime-stone rock, fallen from the mountain-wall above; a beautiful natural altar, as it were, decorated with the light pensile foliage of overhanging turfeh-trees. The camels, relieved of their burdens, after drinking their fill, were scattered about the bowery thickets, cropping the thick blossom with avidity and unusual relish; whilst the Arabs spread among the shady trees, revelling in the choicest beauty of their Desert home, the proverbial "paradise of the Bedouins."

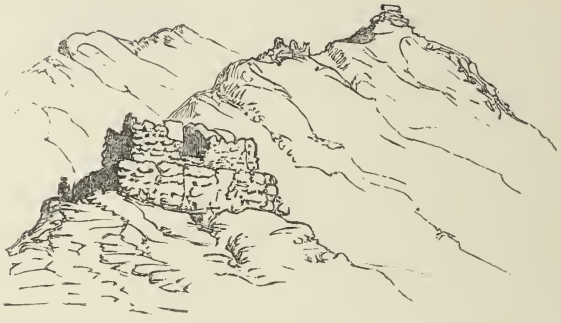
The palms beneath which I encamped were not the solitary ornament of a small oasis; but the outskirts of a dense grove, extending for miles far up the narrow valley. On stepping out of my tent I was at once in the midst of an almost tropical wilderness. In the palm-groves of Egypt the stems are trimmed and straight, and placed generally at regular intervals; but here this most graceful of trees, is half untended, its boughs spring direct from the earth,

and form tufts and avenues, and dense overarching thickets of the most luxuriant growth, through which the sunlight falls tremblingly upon the shaded turf. Among them some few, shooting upright, lift high above the rest their lovely coronal of rustling fans and glowing bunches of dates; but the greater part assume that fantastic variety of form which only untended nature can originate; some, wildly throwing forth their branches, droop to the ground like heavy plumes, laden with a graceful burden of fan-like boughs which almost kiss the turf; others, crossing and intertwined, form mazy alleys of exquisite verdure: the clear stream bubbles freshly on the edge of these arcades, and the deep solitude is vocal with the song of birds; the wind, sweeping down the rocks, plays over the rustling foliage with the gentlest murmur; and shut in by two lofty walls of rock from the dreary Desert without, the traveller, lulled in a dreamy and delicious repose, heightened by his past weariness, forgets awhile its perils and privations, and the long distance he has yet to accomplish across its drouthy sands.

Among these groves the Bedouins of the valley have erected a few rude huts, and cultivate gardens of fig and pomegranate and acacia, which intermingle their foliage with the predominant palm; they also raise tobacco and a little corn. At this period most of them were absent in the mountains around.

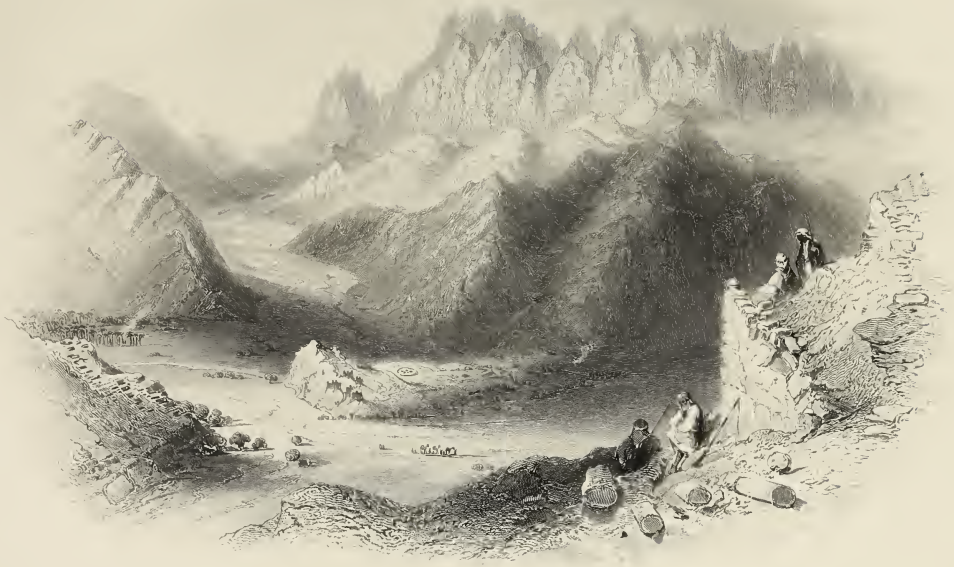
I lingered so long among these thickets, that when I returned to my tent under the palm-trees, Komeh and Ibrahim had prepared dinner; after which I had the afternoon to explore the neighbourhood. I had been struck on my approach with the appearance of a conical-shaped mountain on the side of the valley, exactly opposite the old city, with remains of buildings on its sides and summit; and, on inquiry, found that there were still steps cut in the rock by which I could ascend, and, besides investigating these buildings, survey the environs of the old city to advantage. A guide was soon obtained, and in a few minutes we reached the foot of the ascent, which, by means of a circuitous path, once carefully built up, is by no means difficult. This hill seemed to have been a place of pilgrimage. The first building we came to was a small church or

chapel, placed on a terrace ; the walls of rude stone are still tolerably entire, and some of the broken columns are of good workmanship.



Following upwards the rocky path, we soon reached a second and smaller edifice, with a well of excellent water ; and soon after a third small church and offices, which picturesquely crown the craggy summit of the mountain. The view hence was so magnificent, and will so well explain the controversy respecting the site of the real Sinai and the scene of the lawgiving, that I will here introduce and briefly describe it.

The engraving presents to the eye, more clearly than words can, the position of the ancient convent and church of Feiran, on a singular peninsula-like spur of the mountain, projecting into the middle of the wady, and rearing itself, like the crest of a wave, above its level : on this, the most commanding point, appear the ruins of what were probably the principal buildings ; and fragments of others are seen on different parts of the hill. In the centre, within a small enclosure, are a few capitals, once forming part of the church. Running up from the city towards Mount Serbal, is the Wady Aleyat : this, unlike Feiran, is, for the most part, a scene of utter desolation ; a wild broad bed of stones and rocks, through which the torrents from the mountain sweep down the valley and round the base of the city, leaving the rich deposit of earth in the upper part of Wady Feiran undisturbed. Two small patches of verdure, nourished by springs, may, however, be discerned far up its



E. Brandard

The Ruins of Persepolis

course. The magnificent range of the Serbal is seen here to the greatest advantage: it shoots up in numerous rocky peaks, which, on a nearer approach, appear isolated from each other, and present, as Olin has described it, the appearance of a gigantic stalactite inverted;—the peak to which I ascended is in a line directly above the remains of the little church. In the foreground of the view is part of the remains of the chapel: the deserted ruins of the old town are seen hanging on the side of the mountain on the left; and the little stream, after spreading fertility through the valley above, is seen coming down towards the city, near which it is lost in the sand. * A vast number of the cells before described are seen scattered about on the sides of the mountains round the city.

There is no spot where we may more fitly consider the theory, occasionally suggested long since, and lately brought forward with confidence, after a careful survey of all the sites, by Dr. Lepsius, that the Serbal is indeed the "Mount of God," whence the law was promulgated with the awful accompanying phenomena described in the Exodus. It will be my object in the following remarks accompanied as they are by illustrations which display every feature of the disputed localities, to enable the reader to judge for himself on this subject, in the discussion of which it will be evident that much depends on the alternative laid down in the preliminary remarks on the subject of the Exodus, viz., whether we are to regard the whole train of circumstances as miraculous from beginning to end; or adopt, on the other hand, a rationalist interpretation, and consider the Bible account as a legendary or mythical amplification of a slender historical foundation.

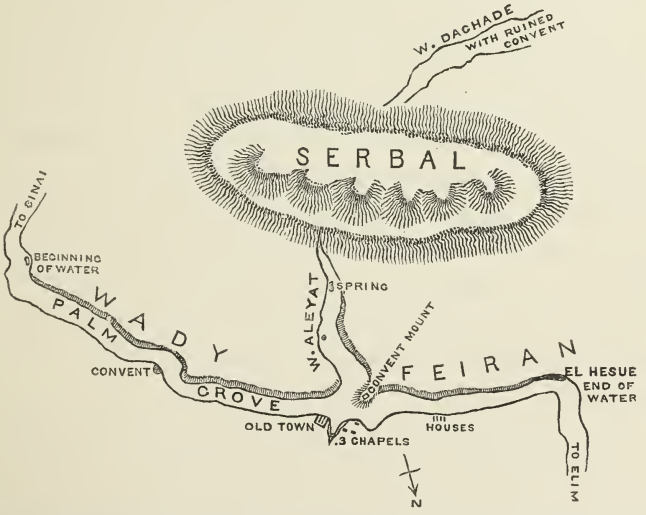
If we adopt the latter alternative, or even endeavour to reconcile ourselves to the received, but, as already suggested, very difficult system, which seeks to accommodate the miraculous with the natural, it is impossible, I think, not to close with the reasoning advanced in favour of the Serbal. There can be no doubt that Moses was personally well acquainted with the peninsula, and had

* At the period of my visit. Dr. Lepsius describes it as *running* down at an earlier season to El Hesue.

even probably dwelt in the vicinity of Wady Feiran during his banishment from Egypt ; but even common report, as at the present day, would point to this favoured locality *as the only fit spot*, in the whole range of the Desert, for the supply, either with water or such provisions as the country afforded, of the Israelitish host: on this ground alone, then, he would be led irresistibly to fix upon it when meditating a long sojourn for the purpose of compiling the law. This consideration derives additional force when we consider the supply of wood, and other articles, requisite for the construction of the tabernacles, and which can only be found readily at Wady Feiran, and of its being also, in all probability, from early times, a place visited by trading caravans. But if Moses were even unacquainted previously with the resources of the place, he must have passed it on his way from the sea-coast through the interior of the mountains ; and it is inconceivable that he should have refused to avail himself of its singular advantages for his purpose, or that the host would have consented, without a murmur, to quit, after so much privation, this fertile and well-watered oasis for new perils in the barren Desert ; or that he should, humanly speaking, have been able either to compel them to do so, or afterwards to fix them in the inhospitable unsheltered position of the monkish Mount Sinai, with the fertile Feiran but one day's long march in their rear. Supplies of wood, and perhaps of water, must, in that case, have been brought, of necessity, from the very spot they had but just abandoned. We must suppose that the Amalekites would oppose the onward march of the Israelites, where they alone had a fertile territory worthy of being disputed, and from which Moses must, of necessity, have sought to expel them. If it be so, then in this vicinity and no other we must look for Rephidim, from whence the Mount of God was at a very short distance. We seem thus to have a combination of circumstances which are met with nowhere else, to certify that it was here that Moses halted for the great work he had in view, and that the scene of the lawgiving is here before our eyes in its wild and lonely majesty.

The principal objection to this is on the following ground—that

there is no open space in the immediate neighbourhood of the Serbal suitable for the encampment of the vast multitude, and from which they could *all of them at once* have had a view of the mountain, as is the case at the plain Er Rahah, at Mount Sinai, where Robinson supposes, principally for that reason, the law to have been given. But is this objection conclusive? We read, indeed, that Israel "camped *before the mount*," and that "the Lord came down in sight of *all the people*;" moreover, that bounds were set to prevent the people from breaking through and violating even the precincts of the holy solitude. Although *these* conditions are more *literally* fulfilled at Er Rahah, yet, if we understand them as couched in general terms, they apply, perhaps, well enough, to the vicinity of the Serbal. A glance at the view, and a reference to this small rough map, will



show the reader, that the main encampment of the host must have been in Wady Feiran itself, from which the summit of the Serbal is only here and there visible, and that it is by the lateral Wady Aleyat that the base of the mountain itself, by a walk of about an hour, is to be reached. It certainly struck me, in passing up this valley, as a very unfit, if not impracticable, spot for the encampment of any great number of people, if they were all in tents:

though well supplied with pure water, the ground is rugged and rocky, —towards the base of the mountain awfully so; but still it is quite possible that a certain number might have established themselves there, as the Arabs do at present, while, as on other occasions, the principal masses were distributed in the surrounding valleys. I do not know that there is any adequate ground for believing, as Robinson does, that because the people were warned not to invade the seclusion of the mount, and a guard was placed to prevent them from doing so, that *therefore the encampment itself* pressed closely on its borders. Curiosity might possibly enough lead many to attempt this even from a distance, to say nothing of those already supposed to be located in the Wady Aleyat, near the base of the mountain, to whom the injunction would more especially apply. Those, however, who press closely the literal sense of one or two passages, should bear in mind all the difficulties previously cited, and the absolute destitution of verdure, cultivation, running streams, and even of abundant springs, which characterise the fearfully barren vicinity of the monkish Sinai, where there is indeed room and verge enough for encampment, *but no resources whatever.* If we take up the ground of a *continual and miraculous provision* for all the wants of two millions of people, doubtless they may have been subsisted there as well as in any other place; otherwise it seems incredible that Moses should ever have abandoned a spot, offering such unique advantages as Feiran, to select instead the most dreary and sterile spot in its neighbourhood.

Thus much in reference to this question generally. But when we enter into details the result is less satisfactory; indeed, we cannot but be astonished that Dr. Lepsius, professing an implicit belief in the historical character of the Bible narrative, should fix the site of Rephidim at the entrance of the valley at El Hesue. The statement in Exodus is, that the Israelites, after their march from the wells and palm-trees of Elim through the Desert of Sin, (on which route there are no springs at the present day, unless scanty, and remote from the road,) murmured, when *encamped at Rephidim*, for want of water, where Moses was directed to strike

the rock in Horeb, whence a stream gushed forth to meet the necessities of the perishing host. This is evidently intended to describe a miracle, but Dr. Lepsius, as stated above, places the site of Rephidim at El Hesue, a fertile spot, as he correctly states, watered by the spring which comes down from the upper part of Wady Feiran, and where it suddenly disappears in a cleft of the rocks; besides which there is, though not noticed by him, a well among the palm-trees. If this was the site of the encampment, how then could the Israelites have murmured while there, for want of water, since a supply existed on the spot? Would they not, on the contrary, have been enraptured, as every one who has tracked this terrible wilderness is also, at finding unexpectedly a bright and gushing stream spring up beneath his feet? One is really at a loss to understand what Dr. Lepsius means in calling the *discovery* of this water by the Israelites a "wonderful event;" here he clearly abandons the text entirely, throws aside Moses and his rod, and converts what is obviously intended to be a miracle into a merely natural occurrence, which he affirms at the same time to have been "the most glorious gift of God to a thirsty multitude, which must have made a deeper impression upon them than anything else could have done."

From El Hesue, at the entrance of Wady Feiran, Dr. Lepsius supposes that the Israelites advanced, unopposed, as far as to the spot *before us in the view*, viz.—to the mount on which the convent stood, which Moses, Aaron, and Hur, and the Israelites, or part of them, ascended; whence they rushed down upon the Amalekites, who were posted *in the valley beneath.* A glance at the position will serve to show how improbable is all this. If the Amalekites intended to defend the Wady Feiran, they would surely have posted themselves on a vantage ground at its entry, *below* El Hesue, and *before* their fainting enemies had reached the rich well-watered oasis; but to suffer them to advance unmolested and refreshed up to the middle of the valley, and then to take possession of that post for aggression, which they themselves should have selected for the purpose of defence, viz., the commanding height of the convent mount, is utterly incomprehen-

sible, unless, which is nowhere affirmed, the Israelites had previously repulsed the Amalekites, and forced them to retire further up the valley. But to obviate these difficulties, and at the same time maintain the miraculous sense of Scripture, we must suppose, that on their approach the Israelites encamped in the barren part of Wady Feiran, where they were distressed for water, and where the miracle was wrought by Moses striking the rock; and that on the following day, when thus refreshed, they encountered the Amalekites, who would naturally post themselves at the entry of the valley, probably enough at or near El Hesue, where there is a remarkable bend in its course; and that after routing them, they advanced up to and took possession of the whole region, where they remained encamped during the period occupied by the promulgation of the law.

I descended from these ruinous chapels into the valley, and clambered up into the area of the small city of Feiran: the principal buildings, probably monastic, range along the brink of the cliff overlooking the valley, a beautiful site. Near the centre of the city are a few scattered capitals belonging to the church, and its last vestiges. The shades of evening were fast falling as I sat upon a block of stone in this area, and looked around, in the perfect stillness, upon the prostrate walls of the city and the surrounding mountains, with their fallen chapels and ascetic caverns. There is something mournful, almost awful, indeed, in thus beholding the memorials of an obliterated Christianity, however corrupt or superstitious: here at least once arose the thrilling hymn of praise; and these dark and void cells had once a human interest, and were irradiated with the heaven-directed hopes and ecstatic visions of the forlorn recluses. But all this has long passed away. Mazriki, who wrote in the fifteenth century, (cited by Burckhardt,) says that in his day the Bedouins alone passed there; there must, however, have been once a considerable Christian population, as Theodosius was Bishop of Feiran, at the time of the Monothelite controversy. When or how it originated is obscure, as well as at what period it was supplanted by the Arabs. Few and scanty indeed are the notices of the place, whose original settlement is nevertheless coeval, in all pro-

bability, with its fertility: it is supposed to have been of old a trading station of the Tyrians, between Ailah and Tur, on the Red Sea.

If ever I wished that certain of my friends could by some magic process peep down upon me, in my Desert wanderings, it was on the night after I returned to my tent: the last red light of day had faded and given place to the silvery radiance of the moon; her orb rose grandly above the eastern peaks of the Serbal; meanwhile the Arabs, crouching in the adjoining thickets, had kindled a fire, which, glaring up into the palm-groves, lit up from beneath their fan-like branches, every spine glittering in the ruddy illumination with a most magical splendour. I wandered away through the groves, to revel in the strange effects thus produced among their tangled alleys by the fitful play of the flames, and the flitting to and fro of the figures; then followed down the spring till beyond the reach of their influence, and where all was again lying in the still calm moonlight — the rivulet, the rocky altar, the hoary walls of old Feiran, and the solemn amphitheatre of mountains which enclose this oasis of beauty from the world beyond. A spiritual presence seemed brooding over the scene, and filled the heart with a deep but uneasy bliss; it was too profound, too wonderful, to be enough enjoyed: it seemed as if I could have wandered for ever about this enchanting ground. But enough of this vain attempt to describe the indescribably romantic Feiran; suffice it to say, that one night and its impressions were worth my whole journey.

October 10. The sharp conical precipices of the Serbal seem at a distance to defy all attempts to scale them; yet, knowing that Burckhardt and others had succeeded, and supposing there might be a pathway similar to that made by the monks of Sinai, and by which the ascent of Djebel Musa is rendered so easy, I engaged a guide, and at an early hour left the encampment, accompanied by Komeh, with some cold provisions and the indispensable zemzemia. The path on leaving Wady Feiran follows the Wady Aleyat, and for some distance is tolerably easy, but becomes gradually more and more rugged as it ascends towards the base of the mountain; yet it was evidently an old way, formerly frequented, as appeared from the

ruined buildings, and the Sinaitic characters which we now and then found scratched on any convenient block of stone. The bed of this wady, as I have before remarked, is very rugged, and could with difficulty have served as a camping ground for the Israelites, save on a very limited scale: there are two beautiful springs to relieve its sterility; one was deep below us; but the second, or upper one, lay directly in our course. The foliage, as at Feiran, is exquisitely beautiful around this upper spring; the water welling out from it is colder and purer than that of the stream below: probably a small hermitage or monastic establishment once existed here. Hence the isolated peaks of the Serbal tower up with awful magnificence, and seemingly defy the most adventurous. We fell in with an old Arab, who cultivates a few vegetables, and who proposed to accompany us on our ascent; a civility we acknowledged by a trifling backshish, but proceeded without him:—all path soon after ceased, and our course hence to the base of the mountain was over a wilderness of loose blocks, which it was no easy matter to cross without slipping, yet still we occasionally found the Sinaitic characters inscribed upon them. So rugged was the way, that though but a single hour had elapsed since we left Feiran, I felt almost completely tired when we reached the foot of the conical precipices, which rise sheer and abrupt from this scene of desolation. The only possible means of ascent is up a narrow and almost perpendicular chasm, dividing two of these impracticable peaks, half-filled with huge crags fallen from above, and hurled one upon another in the most terrific confusion: to get to the top seemed to me impossible; the guide, however, assured us there was no difficulty: with this we began to scramble up the chasm; and in half-an-hour we reached a wild fig-tree, beneath which our Arab guide concealed his gun and cloak. To his sandalled foot the ascent seemed easy; he skipped up among the loose blocks like the wild goat of his native mountains, familiar with every footstep; but to myself the clamber, though I had practised pretty well among the Alps, seemed so desperately toilsome, and so increasingly dangerous as we advanced, that but for the resolution of Komeh, who seemed determined to have me to the

J. Cousen.

summit, I should have flinched and gone back again. We were exposed to the fierce sunbeams of an Arabian noon ; there were no steps to assist us, and hardly the faintest trace of a path, though one had evidently formerly existed ; we had besides to climb up on our hands and knees great part of the way, in imminent peril of slipping down the polished surface of the fallen crags which we were surmounting, and of being dashed to pieces among those below. The fatigue of thus trailing like serpents up the face of the ascent was excessive ; the higher we mounted, the more terrifically the mountain seemed to rear itself above, and if getting up seemed barely possible, descending again seemed perfectly hopeless. At length, after spending about three hours in this manner we reached the summit, consisting of round smooth masses of granite, which it required the greatest attention to get over without slipping. Trembling in every nerve with the violent exertion, we sat down under a huge block, surmounting one of those conical peaks, which at a distance had seemed to me utterly inaccessible to all but the eagle and the gazelle. A cold wind swept across, which threatened to bear us off our legs, and appeared well able to take us fairly across the boundless Desert, and drop us on the hills of Palestine : we took shelter

behind the topmost block of granite, on which is a Sinaitic inscription ; and upon a small heap of stones we sat us down and devoured with eager relish a cold fowl, which, each holding by a leg, we speedily tore into pieces ; and while engaged in this operation

caught sight of a newspaper, carefully arranged between two fragments, so as not to blow away; it proved to be an old number of the Allgemeine Zeitung, with the name, of H. Abeken. Ingolstadt, an associate of Dr Lepsius, who had preceded us to the summit not long before. I wrote my name under his, and restored it to its place: it will be long enough, I dare say, ere the list of adventurers reaches the bottom of the page.

Of the view from this mountain I despair of giving the reader any adequate idea. As before described, it consists of several conical peaks, set upon a mighty ridge, and perfectly isolated from one another: we stood on the top of one of these, a rounded edge of polished granite, dangerously shelving down, from which the precipice, on either hand of us, sunk sheer two thousand feet below. We could not see the chasm by which we ascended; but looked across it to the other peaks, all consisting of similar terrific masses of granite, wildly upthrown from beneath by some awful convulsion, each capped with a similarly rounded weatherbeaten summit, and each with the same precipitous sides. The appearance of the mountain itself was fearfully sublime, and the view from it, except where its intervening crags formed an impediment, all but boundless—the whole peninsula lay at our feet. Though hazy, we could see very far up the Red Sea, towards Suez, making out different points of our route; and we looked across it far into the Egyptian Desert. Tur and the coast downwards also appeared through a cleft. The stern and sterile mountains of the peninsula lay at our feet, an intricate labyrinth, a confused sea of many-coloured peaks, black, brown, red, and grey, with here and there a narrow valley of bright yellow sand, peeping through; Wady es Sheik being the most conspicuous opening; beyond these arose irregularly the plateaux of the great Desert, and the ranges of El Tih, which support it; all fading away into a misty heat, but for which the hills of Palestine might perhaps have been seen in the remotest distance. The solitudes of Sinai, a darker and bolder congregation of wild peaks, lay to the right, stern and black and awful in colouring, and cut off all view of the Gulf of Akaba in this direction.

Nothing on the world's surface could be more desolate than the vast region that floated in the scorching haze beneath us, from east to west, from north to south; mountains, plain, valley, and sea, formed by the slow abrasions and dispositions of countless ages, and then fractured and upheaved, by the agency of fire, or protruded in molten masses through fissures thus created, seemed stamped by nature with eternal barrenness, as unfit for human habitation; no sign of living water, of woody hill, or fertile valley, nothing save rock and sand was visible throughout the wide circumference of the lonely expanse. One dark-green speck nearly under us, peeping between two sterile peaks, revealed where my tent lay "perdu" among the palm-groves of Feiran; and to me at that moment it had an unspeakable charm, though I almost doubted if I should get there with unbroken limbs or neck. After all, even at some risk, and with great toil, it was something grand to brood like the eagle from these all but inaccessible cliffs, over a region to which Biblical history has imparted a sublime interest, and to see, outspread like a map, the chief part of the "great and terrible wilderness," which entombed an entire generation of the Israelites; to be able to trace their route almost from the hills of Marah and Elim, and the Desert of Shur, visible beyond the openings through the defile of Feiran, into the heart of these mountains, and to behold, far-stretched-out, almost to the borders of the promised land, that great central plateau, through which their allotted period of wandering must subsequently have led them.

I am uncertain whether the peak which we had scaled is that climbed by Burckhardt, and upon which he found the Sinaitic character— as Ruppell also did upon that he ascended, being the second from the west of the five principal peaks: but I believe it is the same from which a path leads up from the ruined convent of Wady Daghadé, on the south-west of the mountain. This existence of the Sinaitic writings on more than one peak, seems rather to bear out Dr. Lepsius's view of their being the work of the shepherds who were accustomed to roam over the mountains. The Serbal is 6342 feet above the Red Sea, which is at no great distance; and though it

is 1700 feet lower than Mount St. Catherine, as stated by Robinson, yet from its rising from a far lower level, from its perfect isolation, and the magnificence of its outline, it is incomparably more imposing.

About the summit, and for some distance down the mountain, there grew among the clefts a considerable quantity of pungently fragrant shrubs, which find sufficient root-hold in the slowly accumulating debris, and supply food to the gazelle and beden, or rock-goat, a pair of the horns of which latter animal I found, and carried

home: it is also fetched down for the use of the camel. There is beside plenty of fine cold water, with which our guide replenished the zemzemia. The descent proved, as I had expected, very difficult, and required the greatest attention, notwithstanding which we had some narrow escapes of falling headlong; and for the most part had to let ourselves down from one rock to another by a most toilsome gymnastic process. Resting by the way, the descent occupied nearly as long as the climb: right glad were we to get to the bottom in safety, and to see again the little oasis at the spring. Towards evening we reached the encampment, which appeared most lovely among the palms, and its charms were not lessened by the circumstance of

finding Ibrahim ready with an excellent dinner of three courses, prepared in a superior style of cookery, and to which he had devoted all his energies during the unusual interval afforded by our absence. There was but one drawback to its enjoyment, the company was too numerous; several of the Bedouins of the valley having assembled, either for the pleasure of seeing me eat, or perhaps with some vague idea that they were to be partakers in the feast, as their law is among themselves; but, meeting with no overtures on my part, they at length arose and departed, with a very ill grace, to a short distance, still looking back from time to time as the viands disappeared, with most uncomfortable and rueful glances. Komeh brought them round afterwards, by a cup of coffee and a friendly pipe. Umbarak, and the rest of our Bedouins, had concluded the purchase of the promised lamb, but on some pretext postponed the killing and eating it, till the shroud of night had delivered them from their hungry neighbours, whom they seemed more anxious to get rid of than I was myself, inasmuch as they might claim a portion of *their* feast, could they but manage to be present at it.

"They cooked it in darkness, at dead of night;"

and as they bolted it in secret, sweet I doubt not was the sauce it derived from the success of this clever expedient. Robinson gives a laughable account of Arab cunning, in this matter; having purchased a kid, as a present to his guides, of some Arabs he had fallen in with, he says:—

"The poor animal was now let loose, and ran bleating into our tent, as if aware of its coming fate. All was activity and bustle to prepare the coming feast, the kid was killed and dressed with great dexterity and despatch; and its still quivering members were laid upon the fire, and began to emit savoury odours, particularly gratifying to Arab nostrils. But now a change came over the fair scene; the Arabs of whom we had bought the kid had in some way learned that we were to encamp near, and naturally enough concluding that the kid was bought in order to be eaten, they thought good to honour our Arabs with a visit, to the number of five or six persons. Now the stern law of Bedawîn hospitality demands, that whenever a guest is present at a meal, whether there be much or little, the first and best portion must be laid before the stranger. In this instance the five or six guests attained their object, and

had not only the selling of the kid, but also the eating of it; while our poor Arabs, whose mouths had long been watering with expectation, were forced to take up with the fragments. Beshârah, who played the host, fared worst of all; and afterwards came to beg for a biscuit, saying he had lost the whole of his dinner."

October 11. It was with positive reluctance that I prepared to leave the palms of Wady Feiran; but a long journey was before me, and travelling in the Desert is slow work at best. About noon we were ready, and after inscribing my name on the limestone altar by the side of the stream, in grateful token of the great enjoyment I had derived from my stay, I saw my tent descend, and solitude gathering again over the spot lately animated by my temporary home, then proceeded slowly on foot up the valley towards Mount Sinai. The palm-groves continue for half-an-hour's walk in this direction, and the whole passage, till they cease, is like a region of enchantment; an old convent, in ruins, juts out on a spur of rock, in the midst of the vegetation, just where the sublime summit of the Serbal peeps over the precipitous walls of the valley, which here forms a narrow grassy glade, between two avenues of palms, and is kept moist and green by the spring, which, issuing from the base of a small cliff, trickles across the little area. Among the thickets and gardens are seen the Bedouin women, who suspend the rude cradles of their children from the boughs, while others are playing among flocks of sheep and goats; a scene fancifully beautiful as the fabled golden age.

At length the palm-groves cease, and give place to thick avenues of turfeh-trees, bending over our heads like the alleys of a garden, but with nature's wild luxuriance. The turfeh resembles the weeping birch, but is still more delicate in appearance, and the *manna* of the peninsula exudes in drops from the extremity of its slender pensile boughs; a small quantity is collected and carried to the Convent of Sinai, when it is prepared by boiling, and is then packed in small tin cases, one of which I brought home with me. Thus prepared, it resembles gum in a melted state, with small whitish grains in it, and has a somewhat similar taste, only sweeter and rather aromatic, answering well enough in general to the descrip-

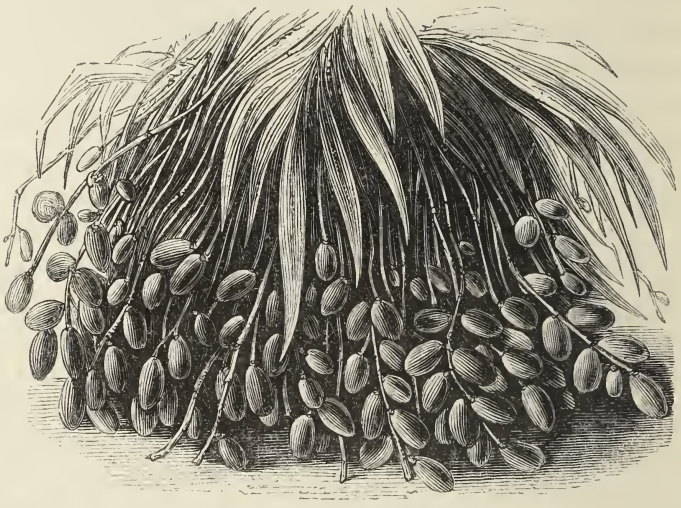
tion in the Bible; but the quantity obtained is very trifling.* This *general* correspondence (for such I must at least deem it) of the actual manna found in the peninsula, with that described in Scripture is very remarkable. Robinson denies that any conformity whatever exists between them: "Of the manna of the Old Testament it is said, 'When the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the Desert a small round thing, small as the hoar frost upon the ground; and it was like coriander-seed, white; and the taste of it was *like wafers with honey*. And the people gathered it, and ground it in mills, and beat it in a mortar, or baked it in pans, and made cakes of it; and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp by night, the manna fell upon it.' Of all these characteristic," he says, "not one is applicable to the present manna. And even could it be shown to be the same, still a supply of it in sufficient abundance for the daily consumption of two millions of people, would have been no less a miracle." Between the flavour of "wafers with honey," "fresh oil," and sweet-tasting aromatic gum, there is certainly a vague sort of conformity, as also between the appearance of "coriander-seed" and small drops of gum; but every one must subscribe, in the fullest sense, to the opinion, that if the Israelites were adequately supplied from trees like these, it must indeed have been by the operation of a constant miracle.

Drs. Milman and Lepsius both regard this as the manna of Scripture; the former considers that the *quantity* was miraculously augmented: how then a supply was provided elsewhere, when none exists in the course of the wanderings of the Israelites, (this being, in fact, the only part of the peninsula where the manna is found,) must be left to these scholars to explain as they are best able. This is, however, but one out of many instances which rise up in passing through this region, to show the fallacy of the present system of accommodation between the natural and the miraculous, and to

* At least, so it seemed to me. Dr. Lepsius, on the contrary, speaks of it as very considerable.

prove conclusively that no middle term will hold upon a sifting inquiry.

Wady Feiran is also celebrated for the only corn grown in the peninsula, and for its luxuriant clusters of dates; in fact, the upper



part of this singular valley contains a rich deposit of earth, brought down from the mountains, which has gradually accumulated, and is rendered additionally productive by the numerous springs. The portion around the ancient city is less fertile, being exposed to the full fury of the torrent descending down a rapid slope from Mount Serbal, which, by its violence and the quantity of stones which it sweeps along with it, prevents the formation of valuable soil. That a considerable population once dwelt here is evident, from the numerous ruins of villages and convents scattered about, though these last may have had revenues at a distance: at present the valley is not carefully cultivated, and affords subsistence to but a handful of Arabs, some of whom are, it is considered, Djebaleyeh, i. e., descendants of the old Christian serfs of the convents.

At length the last traces of this vegetation were left behind, and we reluctantly entered upon the more open sandy valleys. It was soon

after leaving the outskirts of Wady Feiran that Dr. Lepsius noticed a remarkable peculiarity, which seems to have escaped previous travellers, and which I did not myself remark—the former existence of a lake, which has deposited immense masses of soil. "We saw before us," he observes, "a tall, steep, craggy peak, called Buêb, which almost intercepted the valley; and, to my astonishment, I beheld, on the right and left, a number of mounds of earth, from sixty to one hundred feet high, on the sides of the primitive mountain chain, the largest and almost the only real mounds of earth I had seen since we left the valley of the Nile. The valley runs close by Buêb to the left, and from this point is called Wadí Firán. The same tall deposits of earth continued on both sides, and showed that there had once been an elevated basin here, containing water—a lake, which had not then found an outlet; for that is the only way so vast a body of earth could have been deposited. The geographical position of the whole mountain-range in this district bears marks of the same phenomenon. All the streams from the east and north, some of them in large sheets of water, unite here at Wadí Firán."

In this neighbourhood we were passing slowly along, when Umbarak suddenly darted from his camel, and hastened rapidly across the shrubby wady towards a female figure, enveloped in a long blue wrapper, who received him in her arms with a most affectionate embrace; and then followed him towards the little caravan, hanging behind, however, as she approached, and giving shy glances towards the unusual appearance of a man in a straw-hat and trowsers. I found, on inquiry, that this was his mother; and that his tent was in the mountains just above our route. The very evident joy that was produced by this meeting induced me to encamp at a small distance beyond, that the woman might not have to proceed too far from her home on foot, or give up the society of her son: for what would not I have given, at that moment, for a similar apparition! the thought of it made my eyes to fill.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin;"

and thus the mother of this poor Bedouin appeared worthy, in my

eyes, of all respect and honour. When we halted, she busied herself in unloading his camel, and arranging his gear, in a manner that showed she was well acquainted with the business; but still persisted in remaining at a distance from the tent, although glancing at me, from time to time, with lively, curious eyes; wondering, perhaps, what infatuation could drive a man to wander, like an unquiet spirit, so far from his mother's tent. Little could she divine the feeling of melancholy with which I looked that evening upon the setting sun; and less could she suppose that she had been instrumental in causing it. Komeh made a feast for her and for her son, producing all our little delicacies, and giving coffee to the whole company; and it was a joyous night when he took his pipe in the midst, like a little king, by the ruddy blaze of a fire of desert-shrubs. Nor was Umbarak without a grateful sense of these little attentions, and the next day presented us with a skin of conserve of dates, prepared in his home in the mountains. His brother came down the next morning. The woman had reason to be proud of her sons; two finer, handsomer fellows I have not seen in the peninsula of Sinai.

October 12. From our encampment we proceeded towards the Nukb or pass of Hawy: Umbarak's mother had left us and returned to her home. We reached at an early hour the foot of this portal to the wild mountains that bar the bleak solitudes of Sinai. As this was evidently to be a toilsome business for the camels, I dismounted here with Komeh, and took the lead. From the descriptions of this pass which I had read, I expected unusual grandeur in the scenery, as well as great difficulty in the ascent; but after our clamber up the terrific precipices of the Serbal, those which hem in this desolate ravine appeared very insignificant, while the zigzag pathway, built up with stones, seemed comparatively like a broad and easy turnpike-road, which we surmounted with little effort.* Not so, however, did the camels: their piteous cries filled the air, and echoed wildly in the recesses of the shattered cliffs. Catching,

* Before the construction of a road, however, it must have presented great difficulties.

as we mounted higher and higher, the still freshening breeze from the cool region above, we felt equal to anything; and, highly excited at the prospect of reaching the convent in an hour or two, beguiled the way with Komeh's agreeable speculations, touching the various constituent articles of the good dinner which we determined should mark our arrival. In the mean time the groans of the camels had died away in the distance; and we were so far ahead, that it was not worth while waiting for them; the fresh breeze grew stronger and more bracing, and on we went. The narrow valley widened gradually into a high dreary undulating plain, hemmed in by still drearier mountains, which upreared their dark, shattered, thunder-stricken peaks higher and higher on each side as we advanced; while right before us, closing up the plain and shutting it in, towered, sheer from its level, an awful range of precipices, which seemed to bar our further progress through this region of desolate sublimity. As we still advanced, a narrow glen opened up between them, running deeper into the heart of the solitude, and at some distance up this, half-lost between walls of naked rock, peeped out the high wall of the convent, and the dark verdure of its garden, looking, as some one has well described it, like the end of the world. I was wrapped in the feeling of peculiar melancholy inspired by this region, but Komeh uttered a joyful shout—"There was El Deir at last—rest after toil: better bread to be had than at Cairo, fresh fruits and legumes, eggs, and salad, and milk."

This plain is considered by Robinson as the camping ground of the Israelites; its extent is still further increased by lateral valleys receding from the plain itself, between the foot of the first range of mountains and that of the great central mass of crags; the left one being Wady es Sheik, of very considerable extent, the right a smaller recess; altogether making a very extensive open space, greater than any other existing among these rugged barriers, and from every part of which the precipices of Horeb, (es Susafeh,) in the centre of the view, could be plainly discerned—certainly an important literal conformity with the scriptural account. This jagged range of rocks projects into the plain, rising directly from its level in

dark and solemn grandeur; and its summit appears a fitting theatre for the awful phenomena which accompanied the promulgation of the law. Such, by those at least who believe the ancient and monkish Sinai to be identical, is the presumed locality of this great transaction: the annexed view, I will venture to say, is an accurate, though necessarily incomplete, representation of it.

There is no regular ascent to the Horeb of Dr. Robinson, though some have contrived, with no little risk, to reach the summit. Dr. Lepsius climbed, indeed, up the perpendicular face—no small feat: an easier way up might probably be found, by making a wider circuit. Behind it, but not seen on account of the perspective, lies Djebel Musa, the monkish Horeb, the highest peak of the same range; but, as it is invisible from the camp, having no claim to its name and reputation. The convent, with its garden, is seen at some distance up the ravine; and beyond it, closing up the valley, is the rounded form of Mount Mennagia, which Lord Lindsay presumes to be Horeb; but this appears too remote from what must have been the camp, and too partially visible thence, as well as too insignificant in aspect, when compared with the neighbouring heights, to justify such a supposition.

There is a pathway, which may be traced in the view, from the convent round the base of the crags, up into the valley which bounds the other side of Djebel Musa; rising above which may be seen, in remote perspective, the towering mass of Mount St. Catherine,* somewhat higher than the Serbal, being the loftiest peak in the region of Sinai, but infinitely inferior in imposing sublimity of aspect. At the mouth of this valley, marked by its tall cypress, appears another of the convent gardens, to which a small building was formerly attached. With this description and the view, the reader, I trust, will be enabled to form a tolerably correct idea of the immediate environs of Sinai, and of the different theories on the subject of the localities of the lawgiving.

We traversed the plain, and then picking our way up the re-

* This, in Ruppell's opinion, is, after all, the real scene of the lawgiving; almost every traveller has his own theory on the subject.

ceding ravine, among loose blocks of stone, rolled from the precipices above, approached the convent walls, which, although prison-like in their exterior, had the reputation of enclosing a sort of rude comfort within. There was an old watch-tower, but no look-out: the place seemed utterly abandoned, and we crept, unhailed, and seemingly unnoticed, under the high wall; and, having forgotten our introductory letter, seated ourselves in the shade, to wait for the camels, under the aërial entrance, thirty feet from the ground, by which alone admittance is obtained into this jealous stronghold. Two or three small rusty cannon pointed down on our heads, seeming as if they had dozed into the rust of untold years, and would be in no hurry to awake to mischief. We had seated ourselves on the ground, with our backs to the wall, and were dozing off from fatigue, when we were startled by the grating of the iron door over our heads, followed by the projecting of a long white beard, the turning of a windlass, a descending rope with a bar across, and an interrogation in modern Greek, to which neither of us could reply. More beards now squeezed into the narrow trap-doorway, and signs were made that we should mount. I caught hold of the rope, but before properly securing my seat across the bar, the windlass began to turn, and I found myself suspended between heaven and earth, grasping desperately the greasy rope, with my teeth set, and my legs dangling, in momentary risk of a dangerous fall if my grasp should relax, as it was about to do, when, at the critical moment, a vigorous brother, suddenly pouncing on me from the door-way, pulled me in safely, and tumbled me in a heap on the floor of the corridor. All this passed in even less time than it takes to tell it.

Upon recovering breath after this perilous ascent, I found myself in presence of the Superior and several of the brethren. The Superior, as I perceived at a glance, was not the venerable old man mentioned by Stephens and Robinson, but a person of middle age, grave, intelligent, and rather reserved in manner and appearance. He welcomed me kindly; but without bestowing on me the holy kiss, which, however evangelical, has come, in these evil days, as the monks have at length discovered, to be matter of ungracious

jesting. It struck me, indeed, during my stay, that they treat travellers with less familiarity now than was their wont when their visits were more rare, and their habits less known ; having, perhaps, been annoyed at that odd mixture of ill-timed joking and continual grumbling, which characterises so many of the wandering islanders, and of which they leave traces wherever the pages of an album offers an escape-vent for their eccentric humours. Be this as it may, these venerable fathers certainly now keep themselves more apart ; and, content with providing accommodation for their visitors, and putting a cook at their disposal, and thus rendering them independent, no longer invite them to their conventual meals, but leave those who wish it, to seek for that closer acquaintance which, however, they always seem pleased to cultivate. This, at least, was the impression on me during my stay.

The Superior, and one or two others, now conducted me to an apartment, newly erected for the use of travellers, quite clean, and furnished on three sides with a broad and comfortable divan, a door and grated window, communicating with another corridor, commanding the whole interior of the convent, and another window looking into the garden. By this time our embarrassment was relieved and our tongues loosened, through the arrival of a sort of lay brother, named Pietro, who had come from Cairo, to assist in constructing the new buildings, and who spoke French fluently. The Superior inquired after the letter from the branch convent at Cairo, which is always required of visitors, and usually presented before admittance is given ; but we could as yet see nothing of our camels. The bell now clanked for prayers, and I was thus allowed an interval of repose, which I much needed.

When I awoke, I found that Ibrahim had arrived, and that piles of my baggage were encumbering the corridor, while the Arabs had departed, to enjoy for a few days the comforts of their own tents. The corridor was soon cleared, and I found myself in possession of very comfortable quarters, with the prospect of a quiet although brief sojourn in this home in the wilderness. Komeh now came forward, with the convent cook, " a marvellous

proper man;" and, looking at his noble stature, stalwart limbs, ruddy open countenance, and black beard, it certainly seemed to me too bad, although possibly I may be blamed for the avowal, that when so many misbegotten knaves are allowed to overstock this world with their puny resemblances, this fine fellow should be condemned, by a narrow-minded superstition, to die, and—as we are bound to suppose will be the case—leave no copy of himself behind. It was not much he could add to our stock of provisions, beyond fresh bread and a salad; but these to us were real luxuries, and no less the fine clear cold water, from the convent-well. Ibrahim had already gone out to negotiate with the neighbouring Arabs for a lamb, some fowls, and eggs, and a little milk; for none of these sinful indulgences can be had in the convent, being against the prescribed rule of monkish diet.

I did little this afternoon but lounge about the building, with Pietro: he is a singular creature, and passes for half insane, as Komeh mysteriously whispered me. His dress is a simple Arab coat, of rough striped stuff, girt about with a rope; his arms, legs, and head are naked. He is on trial, being as yet only in his novitiate, the presumed weakness of his intellect being deemed no serious obstacle to his holy profession; or at least an obstacle more than counterbalanced, in this little community, (where every one is required to exercise some talent for the general good,) by his valuable accomplishments as a mason. A short acquaintance, however, soon convinced me that Pietro had as little relish for the restraints as for the fare of the convent; and that he meditated a speedy escape from its walls. He is a poor hand at prayers, and telling of beads; and is altogether too wild, and, notwithstanding his supposed infirmity, perhaps too shrewd withal, to bury himself in this den of gloomy monotony. He could talk, after all, too sensibly for a monk; and, even as a listener, was a great acquisition to one who had not made free use of his tongue for a fortnight.

After dinner, I sat in the shade of the corridor, and looked over the interior of the building. Its inmates are now no longer under the temporary excitement of an arrival; and all has repassed into its

usual quiet; one may almost hear a pin drop: now and then a gust of wind sweeps over the bleak perpendicular precipices, which seem threatening to bury it, and furiously rattles an old casement or two; then all is still again. An old irregular wall, patched in different ages, with here and there a tower, fences in and looks down upon the entire maze of buildings: within are courts, and corridors, and galleries, connected by blind passages, and flights of steps, mostly invisible from above. Every now and then a dark-robed figure will suddenly peep out, like a mouse, from one hole then burrow into another, and disappear. But for this, one would never suspect the little busy world hidden beneath,—the snug storehouses of corn, wine, and wood; the monastic makers of bread, distillers of raki, tailors, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and cook, all busy, like ants, underground; the only genteel sinecurist being the Librarian, for if the body is but poorly provided for within these holy walls, the mind is starved outright. The church is wedged incomprehensibly into this labyrinth, presenting, as viewed from above, only a sharp gabled roof, well leaded, with a cross at the top; and by its side rises a minaret, erected at a period when the monks were compelled to admit a mosque for Mussulman pilgrims. Such is the interior of the convent, viewed from above; and I was poring over its singular appearance, when Pietro joined me, and offered his services as cicerone. I was curious first to go round the wall, and, following my companion, dived boldly into blind dark passages, half-choked with dust, sometimes ascending into daylight, and then plunging down again, till we had made the entire circuit; we sometimes diverged by a branch-stair into out-of-the-way nooks and chambers, with rude pallets and grated windows, the abodes of former recluses, of which the convent, in its palmy state, numbered some four hundred, there being now but one-twentieth of that number. These cells looked as though they had never been entered during the centuries that had elapsed since their last tenants were carried to the charnel, and inspired such a feeling of dreary oppressive melancholy, that we gladly hastened into the living regions below.

Here all, though antiquated, was neat and clean; small beds of

flowers and pot-herbs relieved the conventual gloom of the little paved courts; and vines were occasionally trained about the walls, or upon a rude trellis. Here and there a sleek, indulged, well-conditioned cat, sat gravely perched upon a familiar stone. Mounting a flight of steps, we paid a short visit to the Superior, whose room looks down into the principal court: it was neatly whitewashed, and furnished with a divan, but entirely destitute of ornament. Though in appearance naturally grave and reserved, he was evidently kind-hearted; and in the most hospitable manner produced his little store of choice fruit, which he peeled himself, and presented, an attendant handing liqueur. I found it had been a trying season for the convent, a severe rain-storm had carried away portions of the garden-walls, and a terrible and most destructive flight of locusts had swept all the conventual gardens, both here and at Tor; while the new buildings had occasioned an outlay, which, however, was principally met, as I understood, out of the funds at the disposal of the Greek archbishop. All this, as I was privately informed by Pietro, weighed much upon the spirits of the worthy Superior.

Descending the steps, accompanied by him, into the little court, we saw the Ikonomos and Librarian seated on a bench in front of the humble apartment of the latter functionary. They rose to salute us; the Ikonomos, upon whom, as, I need hardly say, his appellation implies, devolves the immediate charge of all the temporal arrangements of the convent, besides the business of communicating with the Arabs, was a fine-looking old Greek, with mingled keenness and prudence expressed in his marked countenance, the effect of which was heightened by a long white beard. The Librarian was decidedly the gentleman of the convent; his manners were bland, and his courtesy as frank and sincere as it was refined; and he had evidently a desire to obtain information from the world beyond. With the assistance of Pietro, and of a few words of Italian which the Librarian had picked up, we contrived to establish a sort of conversation; and, evidently to their satisfaction, I invited myself to their religious service and succeeding repast on the following morning.

There was yet time to pay a hasty visit to the garden, which is without the high wall of the convent, though attached to it, and forming a second enclosure of considerable extent, surrounded by an inferior wall of rude stones, piled up one on the other without cement. The entrance from the convent is by a long, low, dark covered way, which requires one to stoop carefully in passing; at either end is a heavy grated door, which is left open during the day, but, like the garden-gate, is locked at dusk; the keys, as I afterwards witnessed, being then brought in by one of the brethren, who knelt and kissed the Superior's hand as he presented them to him.

As we emerged from this subterranean passage, the last rays of a red and glorious sunset were burnishing the dark plume-like summit of that gigantic solemn old cypress, which far overtops the lofty walls of the convent; but the rest of the garden was sunk in the still shadow of a calm evening, and a quiet and melancholy serenity pervaded its rustling walks. Enclosed, as before said, with a rough wall, it rises by successive terraces, covered with soil brought from afar, up the side of the mountain, which towers above in stern desolation, without a blade of grass, as if threatening to crush rather than shelter the precious acre or two of fertility, so laboriously won and so unceasingly tended. But its adamantine crags have stood firm for ages; and year after year have the trees, striking their rootlets into every crevice, so tightened their grasp of the massive fragments among which they stand, that their gnarled and hoary trunks appear almost as immovable. There are long alleys of gray rustling olives, intermingled with the darker and broader foliage of the fig and mulberry; and a variety of fruit-trees—such as apples, pears, almonds, quinces, and pomegranates, trellises covered with vines, and little beds of herbs and vegetables, maintained by runnels of water, and beaming with a most refreshing, familiar, home-look, in a wilderness which looks like the very grave of nature. An old monk seemed installed as head-gardener; and some of the Arab serfs of the convent are also employed, the terraces being cultivated for corn. The fruits are all of good quality, although the garden was now looking quite at its

Convent of St Catherine

Mount S.

worst, not only on account of the drought, but on account of the ravages committed by the locusts, which had eaten up all before them. The evening closing in, we were obliged to quit the garden, and returning by the dark passage, were locked into the convent for the night. And thus passed my first day at Mount Sinai.

The localities I have alluded to will be better understood by reference to the annexed view, displaying the curious form of the convent, and the surrounding localities, with great clearness; and I hope the reader will consider an exact idea of the place as some indemnification for the unavoidable dryness of a detailed description. The building itself here appears sunk in a ravine, between two parallel ranges of towering crags, and its enclosing wall runs irregularly from the bed of the valley up the steep side of the mountain, so that its interior courts and edifices rise one above another to the topmost wall. This wall is of pretty solid construction, at least the lower portion; and some part is comparatively new, as the French, under Kleber, rebuilt a portion of it. In different places are small antique tablets: the main entrance is by the elevated, and to me memorable, door within the wooden covering: along the wall from thence to the corner, and at right-angles to it, are the recent improvements before alluded to; and here is the delightful terrace where I used to sit at evening with the monks, the new rooms for travellers being prominent in front, on the *right-hand side* of the building, in advance of the older ones, running back in a line with them to the further angle, where is an old tower. The leaded roof of the church, and top of the minaret adjacent, peep up above the corridors and vaults below, which, of course, are, from this point of view, invisible. The building to the right of the mosque, in shade, is the archbishop's room; the rest of the interior is an undistinguishable mass of roofs: a covered walk, as before described, runs all round the interior of the wall, except on the right-hand side, where the travellers' rooms look out upon the garden; but a portion of this walk only can be seen. The entrance to the garden is by the concealed passage before described, nearly under the travellers' rooms; the small building to the right is the

cemetery. The old cypress, also before described, is in the upper corner; it is of enormous size and span: at the angle of the wall *below* is a door, by which an easy descent, with a rope, is made to the back of the building, while at the further end is another. By this former gate one goes out to ascend Djebel-Musa, the pathway to which is seen ascending a hill between two overhanging precipices.

An old legend of the place avers that the good monks were of yore so tormented with fleas, that they would have been driven to forsake the holy walls, but for the timely interposition of the Virgin, who has ever since protected them from such attacks. To myself, more fortunate or more meritorious than some other heretic travellers, this merciful exemption was also extended; but, with all appliances and means to boot, I could not sleep. A gusty wind swept up the ravine, and the rattling of the old casements mingled with the hideous night-cry of the hungry jackal: the close walls seemed to choke me; I longed for the freedom of my tent in the desert, and found, to my surprise, that I had become half a Bedouin. I rose and looked out upon the garden: the trees were bending before the wind, the tall old cypress swayed to and fro with the stormy gusts, as a mast strains in a gale; then pacing the gallery I watched the gleams of moonlight, breaking through clouds scudding rapidly over the silent courts, and up the desolate overhanging peaks. Suddenly the wild dead clanking of the midnight bell broke out; then lights were seen in the church, and a few notes of the Kyrie Elieson faintly sounded at intervals from beneath. I returned to my mattress and fell into an uneasy sleep, disturbed by dreams wild and melancholy as the scene which had surrounded me. On awaking in the morning, symptoms of illness and exhaustion, the result of over-exertion were apparent: Ibrahim, also, was attacked by fever, and manifestly incapable of proceeding to Petra; and as he was my interpreter, I thought myself compelled, although most reluctantly, to give up my projected journey thither. This was a great disappointment; but to break down in the remote wilderness is horrible, and I then felt physically unequal to such a prolongation

of my wanderings. I descended to the church in melancholy mood. On entering it now for the first time, I was both pleased and surprised: although somewhat spoiled by tasteless and gaudy decoration, it is a fine simple solemn basilica, built in the time of Justinian, and is kept with the nicest care by the brethren. Leaning against a carved seat, I waited through the service, of which I understood nothing, but which is described by a previous traveller as "simple, dignified, and solemn, consisting in great part in the reading of the Gospels, with the touching responses and chants of the Greek ritual." To me, it appeared impressive enough, without mummery, and the chants were very moving and devotional: the demeanour of the Superior seemed both dignified and serious. It was affecting to see some very old men come tottering in from a side-passage during the service, whose beards, long to their girdles, as they knelt down, swept the marble pavement, and who, after a brief but earnest prostration in prayer, withdrew; failing nature being apparently unequal to the fatigues of an entire service. And though the piety they nourish may be "traditionary and degraded," it would surely be a harsh judgment which should refuse them the final rest to which through life they have aspired, if the award be according to the measure of what a man has, and not of what he has not. Milton, who was no lover of monks,

> "White, black, and grey, with all their trumpery,"

would at least give them a place in his "Paradise of Fools," which is better than the limbo to which they and their erring piety are devoted by the more exclusive sort of sectarians. Pietro was there, among the others; but his listless vacant manner promised but ill for his attainment of the odour of sanctity.

After service, we proceeded from the church by a side-way to the refectory, an old vaulted room, represented in the annexed sketch. The wall at its extremity presents to the eye scriptural subjects in fresco, in a rude style and much discoloured; below is a small altar. From one side of this to the other extremity stretches a long table, well polished and ancient, at which some generations of departed

monks must have eaten, with ranges of seats, quaintly carved; while silver crucifixes hang at intervals from the pointed roof. The superior, advancing to the head of the table, seated me beside him; the rest took their places below, and the picture of conventual life was to me complete. Before each were placed a loaf of bread, and a pewter spoon and plate; some dishes of the same material contained olives and vegetables; and opposite to myself and the superior was some Arab cheese. A side orifice communicating with the kitchen was now opened, and a large dish was handed in filled with hot vegetables, mixed with some unctuous addition, the whole more nourishing, I doubt not, than, to a strange palate, at least, agreeable. Before this was passed round, one of the brethren rose, and striking on a bell, pronounced a grace, which was again repeated during the repast. In the meantime a young monk had taken his place beneath a small pulpit, and continued to read a homily while we were eating. A certain proportion of raki was also handed round to each of us in a saucer, like a pewter-bowl, with some red Greek wine for myself. This formed the whole repast, which, however, seemed to be eaten with relish: when over, all rose and assembled round the before-mentioned altar, and while incense filled the room, a small piece of bread was broken and distributed to each, and a wine-cup was handed round, of which all present, including myself, partook. To me the whole of this scene was exceedingly affecting; it linked the present to the long bygone past—the feelings of to-day, to those of the early Christian times;—and when, across intervening seas and mountains, my thoughts flew with electric speed to one dear to me by every tie, who at that hour was ministering the bread of life in my native land, surrounded by groups and usages vividly remembered, my heart swelled, my eyes well-nigh filled, and I was compelled to rouse myself, or appear unmanned.

At the conclusion of this interesting service we all proceeded from the refectory to an adjacent piazza, where coffee was handed round, the young monk still continuing his homily, though the conversation was now unrestrained. I had expressed a wish to see the charnel-house, appropriated to the reception of the bodies of archbishops and others,

whose memory is held in particular veneration, and which the monks are not forward to exhibit; but the Superior at once rose and proposed showing it to me, while one or two others followed. It is a small low building, partly underground, in the midst of the garden, divided into two parts, communicating by a door; while opposite is another low vault, in which the bodies are exposed till the fleshy portion is consumed; the bones are then conveyed to the first of these chambers, as to their final receptacle, and arranged, in ghastly symmetry, arm-bone to arm-bone, thigh-bone to thigh-bone, in a compact pile, with a mass of upheaped skulls—from the remains of him who died yesterday, and still lived in the memory of his fellow-monks, to him whose forgotten remains, with their history, are written only in the book of Omniscience—in a manner which testified reverence for the remains of the dead, and presented an appearance far less shocking than I have seen in the crypts and charnels under our own cathedrals. In the second, or inner division, however, there were objects that it was not easy to look on with indifference, or speedily to forget. I have ever since had before me, and I seem to see now, the skeleton of an anchorite, who appeared to have been conveyed from the solitary cell in the mountains, just as he was found after encountering alone the terrors of the last enemy, fixed in the convulsive form that nature took in the parting struggle: the close clenched hands, the emaciated head sunk on the bony chest, the attitude of agonizing supplication—with some few rags of his hair-shirt yet clinging to his frame—all gave to this skeleton the ghastliness of life in death, and told of long years of self-inflicted penance and solitary agony, endured by its parted tenant.

In a box close by were the remains of two hermits, traditionally brothers, of exalted station, who, binding themselves by the leg with a chain, also wore out a life of penitence and prayer in the adjacent mountain. Could we know the histories of those whose mouldering relics here lie before us, how often indeed might truth appear stranger than fiction, reality beyond the wildest visions of romance!

I dined in the old public eating-room, behind which are the other

chambers mentioned by former travellers; all being, together with a kitchen and offices, in the same gallery, which is inscribed with the names of numerous visitors, a few of whom are known to fame. The new rooms are, of course, much more clean and comfortable. I then made the tour of some few of the four-and-twenty chapels, large and small, dedicated to saints of whom I never have heard, and probably never shall, hidden away in different nooks and corners of this interminable labyrinth: all description of these I spare the reader. I also visited the library, which contains, according to Burckhardt, fifteen hundred Greek books, and seven hundred Arabic manuscripts, with some copies of the Bible, from the Bible Society, and a few stray books, left, perhaps, accidentally behind by sojourners like myself; such as an odd volume of the Spectator, for the heinous crime of introducing which pleasant book into such ghostly company, a certain eccentric missionary, on the back of a leaf, denounces the donor as worthy of "forty stripes save one:" "a trim reckoning," and one which he would no doubt be as ready to inflict, as he was once found worthy to receive for himself, in the good cause, at the hands of the misbelieving Wahabees.*

The archbishop's rooms are handsomely enough furnished in their way, though now much tarnished. Several portraits, some of them rather of striking character, adorn the walls.

To make an end of it we now penetrated a cluster of little courts and passages, successively visited the storehouses, and workshops, and forge; the latter of course of the rudest description, but well enough for the few and simple wants of the community: the monks seem to succeed better in their distillery than in the other branches of their internal economy; and yet, as all appear healthy, and some attain to a very great age, we must conclude that their moderate indulgence in the fruits of their labours does them no serious injury. About the courts we saw several of the brethren: the majority seem plain, uncultivated men, of unawakened faculties; but, with all their superstition, and little mutual jealousies, deriving something of mental nobility from the ideas with which the ritual of their

* Wolff's Journal.

religion must render them familiar. I believe I have now noticed all that is remarkable in the interior of the convent.

I often revisited the church, which derives a peculiar and touching interest from its being the only remaining place of Christian worship in the heart of this hallowed wilderness, which once resounded with the chants of such numerous worshippers, as it has done also with the triumphant cry of martyrs and confessors; but where their cells are vacant, their habitations ruined, and the last vestiges of their shrines fast disappearing. I have already remarked upon the care which the monks appear to take of their church. The interior is simple, but impressive, having a nave, with rows of Byzantine columns and arches, and a side-aisle, the roof being flat: the floor is of inlaid marble. The altar-skreen is highly, but not tastefully, decorated; and, like the rest of the building, is ornamented with pictures of saints, male and female, painted in the Byzantine style, on a ground of gold. Numerous silver lamps add to the richness of effect. The principal ornament of the building is a large mosaic on the roof of the semicircular recess above the altar, representing the Transfiguration, and having, in small ovals, portraits of Justinian and his too celebrated wife Theodora. Behind the altar is the chapel, over the spot where the burning bush is supposed to have stood: upon it the utmost richness of decoration has been lavished; and the floor is covered with costly carpets: this holy spot may not be visited without taking off one's shoes. The relics of St. Catherine, whose body, after martyrdom at Alexandria, was conveyed, according to tradition, to the summit of the neighbouring mountain, to which she has given her name, are also preserved with great veneration in another chapel.

The scanty, but very interesting, historical notices relating to the history of Mount Sinai, are collected by Robinson, (Biblical Researches, vol. I.,) from whom, and Burckhardt, I borrow a few brief particulars.—"The legend of St. Catherine of Alexandria, who first fled to Sinai, and whose body, after martyrdom at Alexandria, is said to have been carried by angels to the summit of the mountain that now bears her name, is laid in the beginning of the third or fourth century, about A.D. 307." Even before that period, however, these mountains had become the retreat of Egyptian Christians when

persecuted, whence they were, nevertheless, sometimes dragged and sold as slaves by the Saracens or Arabs. When ascetic seclusion began to prevail, solitary hermits resorted to this region ; and small communities gradually grew up, which were constantly exposed to the attacks of the Saracens, and several instances are recorded of their falling victims. It would appear that Feiran at this time was a city and episcopal see. Justinian, whose passion for building convents and churches seriously impoverished his already weakened empire, compassionating the exposed situation of the anchorites of Sinai, caused the present fortified convent and church to be erected for their protection. From this period the importance of this monastic community appears to have gradually increased, while that of Feiran declined ; and before the close of the tenth century, Sinai appears as a distinct bishopric, standing directly under the Patriarch of Jerusalem. The progress of Mahommedanism among the Arab tribes around, exposed the numerous monasteries and cells, here and about Mount Serbal, (supposed, by the tradition of the present convent, to have numbered six or seven thousand inmates,) to additional perils from this newly-awakened fanaticism ; and from this period they declined, though the convent at Feiran is heard of till the fifteenth century. I have already ventured to express the opinion that the Serbal was, in the earlier ages, considered as the real Sinai ; and that it was, as such, the object of pilgrimage before the establishment of the convent ; though afterwards, as the importance of Feiran declined, the supposed site became transferred.

After the crusades, a very numerous body of priests and lay brethren, under an archbishop, were established, their number amounting, at one time, in 1336, to more than four hundred, which declined gradually, until, in 1546, the number was reduced to sixty,—the present number being about twenty.

At an early period it would seem that the convent had entered into a compact with the surrounding Bedouins, to disarm their hostility. Certain clans of the Tawarah are constituted its protectors, and are, in return, entitled to a portion of bread when visiting either this convent or the branch convent at Cairo : they have beside the exclusive right of conveying travellers. The monks also distribute a supply of bread to their own Arab serfs, in time of drought through this miserable region, when the poor Arabs are reduced to the verge of starvation. This is a heavy burden upon its resources, which consist, chiefly, in its distant possessions, and the produce of its gardens here and at Tor.

The archbishop no longer resides in the convent. It is said that were he to visit it, the great gate, which has long since been walled up, would have to be reopened for six months, during which time the Arabs would be entitled to enter and to be entertained at will. Both the archbishop and superior are elected by the council.

The monks are mostly Greeks, exceedingly illiterate : some remain but a few years, while others spend the greater part of their lives in the convent. Their discipline is very severe. "They are obliged to attend mass twice in the

day and twice in the night. Flesh is entirely forbidden them; and, in their great fast, they not only abstain from butter, and every kind of animal food and fish, but also from oil, and live four days in the week on bread and boiled vegetables, of which one small dish is all their dinner."

The gradually increasing lassitude and debility which I had now for some days experienced, warned me not to attempt any excursion requiring much personal effort; neither, to confess the truth, after having ascended the Serbal, and gained thence so complete an idea of the peninsula, did I feel much inclination to clamber to the summit of the legendary Djebel Musa, which I considered as possessing little or no Biblical, or even scenic, interest. Nor was I very desirous of listening to the stupid legends with which the guides are wont to cram the traveller on his way up, and with which, as they had "come mended" and more ludicrous from the pens of the somewhat ungrateful, and to the minds of the narrators no doubt ungracious, recipients, I was already sufficiently familiar. However, I set off one morning, accompanied by Pietro and a young monk, with a havresac containing bread, coffee, and a bottle of raki, proposing to attempt the thing if I felt well enough; Komeh, with his never-failing pipe and concomitant good-humour, bringing up the rear with one or two stray Arab children. The line of ascent has been already indicated, in the view of the convent, as rising by a zigzag path up the side of the mountain, and which, by the industry of the monks, has lost many of its difficulties, though still steep and rugged enough, especially for an invalid. In about half-an-hour we halted at a clear cold spring, under a sheltering rock, from a point near which is a view down upon the convent, of a wild, desolate grandeur. Here we *ought* to have heard the old story of the shoemaker, but Pietro was culpably remiss with the legends. Leaving this pleasant halting-place, we caught sight of a small ruined cell and garden, on the opposite side of the mountain, dedicated to St. Episteme, once tenanted by a few nuns, an association which seems to possess I know not what of feminine softness and tender romantic melancholy, that relieves the harsh monastic dreariness of the

region. One would fain know their life's story, and what drove them to seek a living tomb in this gloomy Desert. But the last traces of their habitation, with its little garden, are fast vanishing, and their names and histories are quite forgotten. We now came into a deep cleft, between two mighty crags, nearly full of huge blocks that have fallen from above, but through which the monks have also made an easy path, and advanced still higher, to what is called the Chapel of the Virgin,—more properly "the Chapel of the Fleas," this being the spot where the Virgin appeared to the despairing fraternity, and promised to charm away for ever these troublesome inhabitants of monkish sackcloth, though a few are left behind, no doubt to keep them on their good behaviour. Hence, turning to the right, we clambered up to a narrow portal between two rocks, where, in former ages, a monk was stationed to confess the true pilgrim, and refuse admittance to Jews and profane persons, if haply they dared to venture up so far. To this gate, at a short distance, succeeded another, opening into a little round grassy basin, hemmed in by a wilderness of rocky peaks; it comes sweetly on the eye, with its tall lone cypress standing in the midst, like the milder genius of solitude—hard by is a well of cold water under a fragment of rock; and a mouldering chapel stands at a few paces above. Had Milton seen this spot, he would have certainly described it in his "Penseroso." In this retirement, we made a repast of bread and coffee, with a dash of raki to keep out the chill of the mountain air; and here, feeling already very tired, I would have lingered an hour or two, and then returned to the convent; but the tardily awakened zeal of a pilgrim pushed me on to further adventures. This Chapel of the Prophet Elijah was built in honour of what a modern traveller curiously terms, "his memorable interview with the Almighty," in Horeb; but whether, as he prudently observes, "this is the precise spot where he heard the still small voice which followed the thunder and the earthquake, can hardly be known with certainty."

Hence, as a true pilgrim, I ought to have scaled the top of Djebel Musa, which towered above; but the flame of my zeal had burnt out, and I preferred returning to the convent El Arbain; and thus, after ascending slightly to a 'col' above this green bason, we

began the steep descent of the other side, by an old and apparently disused pathway. Here, rising to the height of eight thousand and sixty-three Paris feet* from the glen into which we were descending, Mount St. Catherine opened upon us, but with only the grandeur derived from its vast, sombre, and formless mass of granite, with its poetic tradition hanging over it, and which a German painter has so exquisitely embodied. Artistically speaking, the scenery on this excursion disappointed me: it is indeed dreary and savage, but neither noble in form, nor picturesque in outline. We soon caught sight of the forsaken convent El Arbain, with its garden, and by a steep path, but one far easier than that on the other side, reached it about noon.

This convent derives its name, "El Arbain" the Forty, "from the circumstance that the Arabs once took it by surprise, and killed the forty monks who were its inmates. Hence it is called by the older travellers, the Convent of the Forty Saints or Martyrs." It is very much smaller than the convent of St. Catherine, and, gradually neglected, has been, like many others in the peninsula, finally abandoned by the monks; but a few Arab serfs yet attend to the garden, which is tolerably extensive, and presents, in addition to the same kind of verdure as that at St. Catherine, a grove of tall poplars. There is little to detain any one in this lone, neglected spot; and I proceeded down the rugged ravine to go round to the convent by the plain Er Rahah, passing a few Sinaitic inscriptions. The rest lingered behind, so that I passed, without noticing it, the curious "Rock in Horeb," which (the idea being doubtless suggested by its singular appearance) Moses is supposed to have struck to bring forth water for the host, together with the spot where Aaron cast the golden calf, and that, where Moses descending from the mountain, dashed down and broke the tables of the law, the fragments of which are still religiously believed to be buried under the rocks. Altogether my pilgrimage to the monkish localities of Mount Sinai was shamefully incomplete and heterodox; but happily my

* Rüppell.

deficiencies in this respect have been more than made up by former writers.

October 20. I had now spent several days within the convent walls —had become, in a state of mental and bodily lassitude, half reconciled to its dull routine, and, notwithstanding the smallness of our stock of ideas and topics in common, had by little and little established a decidedly friendly feeling with the Superior, the Ikonomos, the Librarian, the cook, and the old gardener ; meeting them every evening on the convent terrace overlooking the garden, when the sun declined, and the shadows crept up the surrounding peaks, and all was hushed and cool, and reciprocating our little store of comforts and luxuries, I felt half loath to leave them and to launch again upon the burning waste. Thus it is with the traveller ; no sooner does he begin to grow to anything, than he is rudely torn from it ; he no sooner begins to love, than he must hasten to forget ; and few are the friendships that outlive the feverish hurry of his vagabond course. I began therefore reluctantly to collect all my moveables, accepted a skin of that confection of dates and almonds for which the convent is famous, as well as a box of manna ; (for which little presents of course an equivalent was given ;) distributed small donations of tea, and other trifles, and, after bestowing the customary and very moderate sums on the cook and others, conveyed to the Superior the hundred piastres, which is the minimum of what is usually given, as an offering for the hospitable shelter of the convent. With a supply of bread for some days we had already been furnished, which was of course also paid for.

If our arrival at the convent was unnoticed, this could not be said of our departure, for it was graced by a tumult and uproar which might have awakened the dead. Immediately on first reaching it, Umbarak and his Arabs had, as I have already said, dispersed to their tents in the mountains, with the understanding that they were to reassemble in a few days. Knowing that they had arrived, I despatched Ibrahim to negotiate for four camels instead of five ; our reduced stores rendered the fifth animal quite unnecessary, as in fact it had been from the beginning ; and he returned

with the message that four camels should be ready on the following day. It was noon when Komeh, in a great passion, came running in, to say that Umbarak and a whole posse of his Arabs was beneath the gate, requiring that we should take five camels as before, and refusing to proceed unless we did so. I went to the aerial portal, and looking down below, saw the whole space blocked up with Umbarak's friends and camels; the Arabs, in fact, had combined to get a hundred piastres out of me. Resolved, notwithstanding, to make a strong demonstration before yielding, I held tight by the rope, and leaning out, made a spirited but useless oration, which Ibrahim translated as well as he could. Hereupon ensued a tremendous uproar, in the midst of which the baggage was lowered; and, parting from all the inmates of the convent, I went out by a back way with the Superior. Umbarak slunk aside, quite mortified; for he felt, though he had succeeded in his dirty trick, some of the camels at least being his, it was at the loss of consideration and character, and was likely to injure him with future travellers. Before the annoyance from this source of discord had well ceased, a second was added; the whole tribe of mendicant Arab women and children about the convent surrounded us with importunate cries for "backshish;" and though a pocket-full of small coin was distributed among them, like a few drops on a raging fire, it seemed only to increase the fury of their attacks. The Superior, unable to moderate the clamour, laughingly wished me good bye, and made his retreat, which I immediately accepted as the signal for my own; and darting off at a quick pace, left the camels to follow. My persecutors dropped astern one by one, till the distant hurly-burly died away, and left me once more to the silence and solitude of the Desert.

With the full intention of returning to Cairo, by the way of Sarabut el Khadim, we turned down Wady es Sheik, instead of taking our old road by Nukb Hawi; and for some time proceeded almost in silence, leaving on our right the Arab tomb of Sheik Salih, much venerated by the Arabs, and to which they perform pilgrimage;*

* Robinson.

and encamped for the night, about three hours distance from the convent. The morning came, and while the camels were loading, I proceeded on foot a little way in advance; it was near the fork of the roads leading to Akaba and Cairo, and it now became necessary to decide finally, whether or not to renounce Petra, the chief object of my pilgrimage. I had already, in fact, reasoned the matter for many an anxious hour at the convent, and felt perfectly satisfied that it would be most highly imprudent in my state of health, and with Ibrahim also sick, to attempt it; yet now, at the last moment, I could not give it up;—I should most probably never have another opportunity;—and at last, like so many others who are very wise and very prudent, till their hidden penchant suddenly blazes forth, followed the strongest motive at the decisive instant, and like them too, no sooner had I resolved on having my wish *coute qui coute*, than I began to find reasons in abundance springing up to encourage me, while difficulties vanished like the morning mist. I hastened back and astonished Komeh, by announcing my sudden resolution to proceed with him alone; and not waiting to argue the matter, told Ibrahim he must return with one of the camels, a bag of provisions, a water-skin, and the spare tent; scrawled a hasty note to my friends the Lieders, gave him some dollars; and in ten minutes he was on his way to Cairo. It was well we did not attempt to take him on—already very unwell, at Suez he broke down utterly, and after remaining there some time, presented himself on my return to Cairo, wasted to a skeleton, and hardly to be recognised. I was now thrown entirely on Komeh; and his fidelity and courage, with his invincible good-humour, and tact in managing the Arabs, highly valued as they had hitherto been, proved, during the remainder of the journey, beyond all price.

In leaving Mount Sinai for Akaba, the solitude of the Desert seems to deepen, and the prospect of possibly breaking down among its remote defiles becomes more dreary and hopeless. One has no longer the hospitable convent in perspective, but a country increasing in wildness, and more and more insecure and remote from all chance of assistance. It is, in addition, the most uninteresting part of the

journey: no object is in prospect but far distant Petra, and there is nothing on the way of any historical interest. I shall, therefore, abridge my narrative of this dreary interval of our wanderings for the reader, as we earnestly wished we could have abridged the journey for ourselves. Yet there was one source of interest which I must not omit to notice, and which continually recurs, and, indeed, almost haunts the mind, in passing through this, the very heart of the "great and terrible wilderness," where scarcely a trace of human footstep is to be met with, giving to it a solemn though often depressing influence. If, indeed, after their many experiences of the protection of their God, that race of Israelites who came forth from Egypt were rejected for their unbelief on the very border of the Promised Land, and doomed to wear out their remaining days in this horrible Desert, then there is not, probably, a nook of one of these lonely defiles, "rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun"—not a solitary spring among these arid mountains—which has not heretofore witnessed the agony of the last parting, as, one by one, until the forty years were fulfilled, the wearied progenitors of the Jewish race sunk under their toils, and were consigned by their children to a desert grave.—Here, then, a whole nation has melted away, as the torrent of the wilderness sinks into the thirsty sand, and leaves no trace—

> "And millions in these solitudes, since first
> The flight of years began, have laid them down
> In their last sleep, the dead reign there alone."

There is little to guide us in tracking the path of the Israelites beyond Sinai; indeed, it appears to have been rather a wandering, than a direct course. The names of most of their halting-places have utterly perished; and, it must be borne in mind also, that if Serbal was the real Sinai, their route thence towards Seir and Kadesh-Barnea must needs have been quite different, probably by Wady Sheik, and across the Tih, down Wady Kulakah to El Ain, and then either by my own route, down Wady Weteir to the sea, or across the high desert from El Ain towards Ezion-Gaber and Edom. Hazeroth, the third station after leaving Sinai, by the more direct

road to Akaba, is supposed by Burckhardt, in accordance with his belief that Djebel Musa is the real Sinai, to be identical with the fountain El Hŭdhera, which was at some distance on the right of our road—an opinion confirmed by Robinson. "The identity of the Hebrew and Arabic names," says the learned professor, "is apparent, each containing the corresponding radical letters;" and the distance of eighteen hours from Sinai accords well with the hypothesis. "The determination of this point," he adds, "is, perhaps, of more importance in biblical history than would at first appear; for, if this position be adopted for Hazeroth, it settles at once the question as to the whole route of the Israelites from Sinai to Kadesh. It shows that they must have followed the route upon which we now were to the sea, and so along the coast to Akaba, and thence, probably, through the great Wady el Arabah to Kadesh. Indeed, such is the nature of the country, that, having once arrived at this fountain, they could not well have varied their course, so as to have kept aloof from the sea, and continued along the high plateau of the western Desert." To the latter opinion, however, some plausible objections may be raised. It seems most probable that, if we reject the supposition of a continual miracle, the course of the Israelites would be guided mainly by the few springs and fountains scattered about the Desert, each of which would naturally prove a halting-place —perhaps for some time—and that thus they would gradually advance towards the borders of the Promised Land by the best watered rather than by the most direct route.

Whether they departed from Feiran or the present Sinai, most probably they would come to El Ain, a noted spring in the heart of the wilderness, which we reached towards the third evening after leaving the convent, having first passed through a frightful burning Desert, where we encountered but one solitary old Arab, who stared and laughed with childish delight at such an unusual apparition as a Frank, and remained long gazing at us in a fixed attitude till we were lost among the distant defiles. This little patch of wild palm-trees, with the surrounding Desert vegetation, has been compared to Feiran; and, although utterly undeserving of that honour, yet it is a

grateful sight in a region like that we had traversed. It is at the foot of one of the ranges of El Tih, and a singular sandstone mountain, in shape a truncated cone, rises beyond it, broken into strata of the most fantastic colouring—red, white, yellow, and purple—glaring and flaming under a cloudless sky. A small stream of living water springs up out of the thirsty sand, and trickles down a narrow glen, among broken tufts of reeds: our mouths, with those of the camels, were at once applied to the welcome refreshment; the skins

were filled; and we proceeded down the bed worn by the little stream, which meandered through the valley, and took a direction towards a cleft in the mountain range. Almost as if by magic, we found ourselves gliding into the jaws of a gloomy defile—the sandstone gave place to the dark purple hue of the porphyry, precipices of which rose higher and higher, with the most awful grandeur I ever beheld, scarce leaving a narrow space below, through which the small stream glided noiselessly, nourishing here and there a wild palm or two, till it was lost in the sand. It was impossible to shake off the infectious melancholy inspired by this desolate region. The pass opened a little, and we encamped among a few bushes fringing a small rise of soil, deposited by the eddy of the winter torrent, which sweeps down this gorge, hemmed in on all sides by tremendous

mountains. We kindled a large fire: the howlings of the hyena and jackal, now shrill and blood-curdling, startled us with their almost immediate vicinity; then echoing wildly, were half lost among the distant cliffs; and ever and anon, through the lone watches of the night, burst forth, like the wailings of some unquiet spirit, haunting the scene of bygone wickedness. Komeh, seated with his pipe before the fire, dilated on his perils in Abyssinia—his nightly bivouac in the midst of lions, only kept at a distance by the glare of the fires; and then, closing my tent door, stretched himself on a mat across the entrance, with the pistols ready at hand. This terrific defile is called Wady Weteir.

October 23. The whole of this day we were engaged in the further descent of Wady Weteir to the sea. This wady, everywhere sunk between lofty mountains, appears to be the great drain of this region, and a powerful torrent sweeps down it in winter, depositing here and there a sediment upon which a little verdure springs up. The sandy bed of the valley was curiously marked with numerous tracks of wild beasts and birds—the hyena, jackal, fox, gazelle, partridges, and the sinuous trail of serpents, &c. Not till towards evening we fell in with a few Arab women and flocks. Never was anything more dreary than this route, till at length, at the close of the day, we caught our first sight of the blue gulf of Akaba, which we hailed as a token of our deliverance from the seemingly interminable defiles of the peninsula, for we might now follow its bright borders all the way to the city from which it is named.

No incident of the least mark occurred till our arrival at Akaba, on the third afternoon from our reaching the shore of the gulf. We were here on the track of Robinson, who has described, with his characteristic fidelity and minute accuracy, every inflection of the coast, and noted the mouth of every wady, at its point of junction with the sea. This journeying by the sea-side was truly delightful, after penetrating the interior; and we rambled along the shore, picking up shells, and revelling in the fresh breeze, while the camels pursued a more direct course. In some places the mountains descend close down to the sea; in others, recede and leave small

plains, dotted with scanty verdure; and towards Akaba we paced round beautiful inlets, so transparent that the fish might be seen sporting, far beneath the translucent wave, among beds of coral. The gulf is about ten miles wide in the centre, narrowing gradually as it runs up to Akaba, and is everywhere bordered with grand, though desolate, mountains. At length we gladly caught sight of this, our temporary halting-place, though we could reasonably anticipate little else than torment during our stay there. It first appeared in a dark grove of palms, as we began to round the head of the gulf, peeping in between the bold and rugged headlands of the coast and the ruins of a castle on a rocky island, supposed by Schubert to have been the ancient Ezion-Geber, at a short distance from the shore. This castle is evidently of the middle ages, of pointed architecture, and must have been of some extent; it was considered formerly as the citadel of Ailah, the Elath of the Bible; though, if that city was as distant as Akaba, one is at a loss to understand the propriety of such a designation: this led me to look attentively at the coast in passing, with the idea that the island might have stood out as both a fort and a shelter for shipping belonging to the ancient town of Ezion-Geber, noticed in scripture as "near" or "by Elath," on the shore; but I could fix on no place which appeared sufficiently eligible, or which presented any traces of ruins. It is not improbable, however, that Wady Tabe, some way further on, is the ancient site; and that here, indeed, Ezion-Geber really stood, afterwards called Berenice by Josephus. This fortress was, at any rate, a stronghold in the time of the Crusades, "and was unsuccessfully besieged with ships by the impetuous Rainald of Chatillon in 1182;" and about a century later abandoned for the castle at Akaba. Its mouldering towers and embattled walls, traced irregularly along the jagged precipices overhanging the sea, form a noble picture, and give back, at least, the associations of a stirring age to fill the utter void of the present.

Rounding the angle of the gulf we reached the edge of the broad Wady el Arabah, which here comes down to it from the Red Sea, bounded on each side by a range of mountains, and could look

far up it towards the heights of Edom. We were pacing slowly round the border of the gulf, and the beautiful palm-grove of Akaba was beginning to open upon us, when we met some Arabs, from whom we learned that the son of Sheik Hussein, named Muhammed, a youth about eighteen, was then at the castle, his father being at Cairo to escort the Mecca pilgrims, who, in a few days, were expected to leave that city, and to pass, of course, through Akaba. This was indeed most gratifying intelligence; first, as it saved the time, often two or three days, lost in sending for the Sheik of the Alawin Arabs, before negotiations could be entered into; and, in the second place, because we hoped that it would be somewhat easier to make a fair bargain with this youngster, new to the business, than with his cunning old father, who had grown grey amid practices of the most shameful extortion from the unfortunate Franks that fell into his clutches, and would not fail, I was sure, to take the fullest advantage of our situation. It was in high spirits then that we reached the palm-groves intermingled with gardens, picturesquely scattered along the margin of the beach, and pitched the tent on a rising ground beneath their shade, with the sea beneath, bending beautifully round the end of the gulf, fringed with palms, having a background of distant mountains, with the mounds of Ailah on the right-hand, and the old castle-wall behind us—a spot one might imagine to be sacred to everything gentle and beautiful.

It has not, I believe, been explained that the different tribes of Bedouins scattered about Arabia Petræa have each the prescriptive right of conducting travellers through their respective territories, and of furnishing them with camels; consequently, the Tor Arabs, who had brought us from Cairo and Mount Sinai, would not be allowed to escort us through the country of the Alawin, which extends from Akaba up to Petra, the route we were now to pursue. Taking advantage of the traveller's peculiar position at this place, on his way to Hebron and Palestine, when he has no alternative, if pressed for time, but to accede to any terms, however exorbitant, or give up seeing Petra on his way; and making use of the pretence that this part of the country, being very insecure, requires extra

guards, which, although it might formerly have been, is now no longer the case, Hussein, the Sheik of the Alawin, has generally extorted, for the use of his camels, a sum double or treble that required by the Tor Arabs for the use of theirs, although even that is far too large. Emboldened by the success which had usually crowned his dogged perseverance, he took advantage of the passage of Lord Castlereagh, to demand a most enormous sum for conveying him, with his suite, to Hebron ; upon which his lordship, after conveying to him his ultimatum, and on its being declined, went by a different route to Hebron, and from thence visited Petra ; thus disappointing the old extortioner when he felt sure of his prize.

With a scion of this worthy personage we had now to treat, and soon discovered, to our sorrow, that the qualities of the father had descended quite unimpaired to the son. Sheik Muhammed came to the tent, accompanied by a few *advisers* of his tribe, and the sub-governor of the castle, whose object, I suppose, was to see fair play between the parties. The young Sheik had a look of desert blood and breeding about him, a general delicacy and refinement of appearance, and superior manners ; but his full, dark, half-languishing eye, probably a copy of his Arab mother's, somehow or other never would look one in the face ; and the optics of the whole party, indeed, seemed infected with a curious obliquity of direction, too plainly derived from conscious rascality, and ominous of high prices.

They formed a circle round the interior of the tent ; pipes and coffee were brought, without which nothing can be effected here, and when the clouds of smoke began to mount Komeh commenced negotiations, while I affected to sit in a state of dignified indifference. My arrangements were not those usual with travellers, who generally proceed direct from Petra to Jerusalem ; for having already been twice in Syria, it was my intention, after visiting Petra, to return to Akaba, and cross the high desert to Cairo, meeting, if possible, the Caravan on its march. This would add some ten days at least to the usual time expended, and we anticipated, of course, a corresponding demand ; yet, when the young sheik, after a little whispering, put forth a demand of five thousand piastres, or fifty pounds

sterling, for the number of six camels only, all patience forsook us at once. On such occasions nothing is more provoking than to find that you cannot make your wrath intelligible. In the choicest broken English and Italian, I now desired Komeh to tell him that the Alawin had made the name of the Bedouin to stink in an Englishman's nostrils; that I would never be foolish enough to pay such a sum; that we were not going to Syria from Petra, but returning to Cairo; and that unless by noon the following day they came to reasonable terms, I would not waste another moment, but would then set off there direct, denounce them to the Consul, and prevent a single traveller from taking that route to Petra. A stormy altercation now ensued between Komeh and the rest of the conclave; all howled and gesticulated simultaneously, without respect of persons, the commonest Arab being here on a level with the sheik, and at liberty to give his opinion with his utmost stress of lungs. At length the whole body departed, declaring positively, that I should see nothing of Petra, unless I acceded to their terms.

This was an unexpected issue, but happily materials of consolation were at hand: Akaba proved to be a little Goshen; fish, flesh, and fowl, fresh fruit and vegetables, came pouring in; a supply of bread was ordered for the following morning; and in the enjoyment of the best dinner we had compassed since leaving Cairo, I endeavoured to forget the antecedent tribulations.

We had got rid for a while of the Arabs and their clamour, they had retired to discuss the matter in all its bearings, and were probably for hours in noisy conclave, but, for the moment, it touched me not. The sun, whose noon-day beams had shone upon a scene of furious debate, now sunk in glory behind the hills of the western wilderness; the sea murmured gently at the foot of the waving palms;—the Mughreby soldiers of the little fortress came down to the sands to pray; I left my tent, and strolled along the cool shore: there, one might have fancied one's self on the edge of some green island of the Southern Ocean, so sweetly did the thick verdure hem in the rippling waves, so lonely and solitary was the place, at but a stone's throw from my tent; and there too were the ruinous

mounds of that ancient Elath, near the Ezion-Geber where Solomon built ships to go in search of the luxuries of India, during the brief period wherein the Jews rose to commercial importance; but not a speck of a sail now appeared on the solitary gulf.

October 27. The morning came, which was to decide our controversy with the Alawin, but no abatement of their demands had been proposed. I was in heavy mood. To have come all this way round out of the direct road from the convent to Cairo, at a great extra loss of time and money, and not to see Petra, which now presented itself to the imagination as still more strange and romantic than ever, when seemingly obliged to renounce the idea of visiting it, was enough utterly to overwhelm one's spirits. Of all this my persecutors were doubtless well aware, and counted upon it to undermine my resolution; but I had fully resolved not to yield. They did not renew the negotiation, but still remained apart in unintermitting conclave, (for nothing can tire out an Arab,) and eyeing my movements askance from the distance. Of all things, suspense is the most harassing, and peculiarly so to a solitary wanderer, beset with hostile knaves, and with no one to back him.—I came therefore to a resolution at once, and desired Komeh to strike the tent, and prepare to depart for Cairo; having detained the Arabs who brought me from the convent, as otherwise we should have been without any means either of retreat or of advance. Our preparations progressed rapidly, the camels were soon ready, and beckoning to Komeh to bring them on after me, I advanced slowly along the beach. The Arabs had not counted upon this sudden move, for we could see them getting into high clamour; and the sheik, with one or two of his confederates, came running in haste to Komeh, and whispered in his ear, that he was willing to come down to four thousand piastres, (forty pounds.) This was rejected without hesitation, and we kept still on our way, the camels following. I could see now that the right thing had been done; the piastres were slipping off like Lord Castlereagh's, and after a little more desperate gesticulation among themselves, at which I could not help laughing in my sleeve, Komeh was a second time brought to, and another thousand piastres were struck

off their exorbitant demand, which brought it down to something a little nearer to the bounds of moderation. This gave me pause, and we all clustered beneath the shadow of a palm. For the time and distance, the sum appeared less than any preceding traveller, of whom I ever heard, had got off for, and I agreed to it ; but so eager was Muhammed to clutch the money, that he wanted to make it a condition, that the whole should be paid in advance. This pleasant proposition, however, I parried by another, namely, that he should receive one half at Akaba, in presence of the Governor, who should draw up a contract, and witness the payment; and that not a piastre more should be given, till our arrival at the Consulate in Cairo : this carried, the sheik next said he could not start for two days. But the idea of such a delay was insupportable ; besides, it was now my turn, and we had taken but a few paces forward, before Muhammed promised to set off at noon the following day, while we resolutely declined paying anything until he was ready to start. The tent repitched, all now repaired to it; Muhammed bore my hand to his head, in token of amity and good faith ; the Governor, who privately declared to Komeh, that he had been instrumental in bringing about this blessed result, seemed highly pleased, and hoped I would give him what Komeh called a "little carreter" at parting : I was then left to kill the time as I best could, till the following noon.

The Castle, or rather walled enclosure, stood on a rising ground at a short distance behind my tent, but my troubles had so absorbed me, that I had hitherto neglected to visit it. It is an oblong quadrangle, strengthened by towers at the corners, and having a bold and deep gateway on the north side ; presenting altogether, a striking appearance ; the masonry, of alternate layers of red and white, adding to the picturesque character of the building. According to Burckhardt, it was erected by the Sultan el Ghoreeh, in the sixteenth century, as the third fortified station on the route of the pilgrimage to Mecca ; the first from Cairo being Ajrud, near Suez ; and the second Nûkl, on the high Desert, which we took on our way back. These stations, are at about three days' journey from

one another, and at each of them is a deep well, for the use of the caravan. Akaba is the most important of the three; but the interior of the building answers but poorly to its striking external appearance, being simply a large court, with a well and ranges of magazines for storing provisions, and with slighter erections above, the whole having a miserable, broken-down look, which convinced me that we had done well in pitching the tent without; to say nothing of the freedom from petty annoyances thus attained. Some thirty soldiers, mostly, as it seemed to me, Mughreby, or western Africans, inhabit the fortress, including the Governor, then absent at Cairo to escort the caravan, together with his officious subordinate already mentioned, a gunner, and commissary of the stores, who is, in fact, of the most importance. These hold the castle for Mehemet Ali, and appear to be on the best terms with the surrounding Arabs, of whom a little colony has grown up around it, dwelling among the palm-trees; there are also a few small stone hovels, occupied by petty dealers, by whose assistance we replenished our stores, at of course rather high prices, especially as the caravan was expected in about a fortnight, and provisions were *up*.

October 28. Muhammed, finding no piastres forthcoming, was true to his word, and before noon his camels were assembled, with their guides, as wild-looking a set of fellows as one would wish to see. The sub-governor, provisory secretary, and Muhammed, then repaired to my tent, and with the usual pipes and coffee came on the signing and witnessing: the secretary having begged of me a piece of paper, wrote out before us the conditions, which were then read aloud, and the tenor of which may be inferred from what has already been said. I then poured forth on the carpet a heap of gold ten-piastre pieces; Muhammed's eye glistened with delight, he stamped the end of his finger on the wax, then again bore my hand to his head; and if he ever looked sincere in his life, did so at that moment. To do him justice, he fulfilled the conditions punctually, and never troubled us for another para till we were near Cairo. The Governor received also his "little carreter," which set

forth, that he had done his best to serve the Frank traveller ; a document which, ridiculous as it may seem, might possibly be of some small service to him at Cairo ; probably also he got a taste of Sheik Muhammed's piastres. I gave him nothing, nor did he ask, being just then on his dignity ; but the secretary received a little douceur for his friendly services, in which they probably went snacks behind the scenes. As soon as he had issued forth from the tent ; Muhammed was surrounded by his Arabs, all craving their just proportion of the precious instalment, for the hire of their respective camels ; whether they got it, however, may be questioned. In the meantime, Komeh was urging everything forward, and about noon we paced off from the castle, with the salutations of our official friends.

The road to Petra soon passes the mounds of Ailah, or Elath, which subsisted as late as the Mohammedan conquest ; it then ascends the broad Wady el Arabah, which, as before observed, here comes down to the head of the gulf, in a line from the Dead Sea, indeed forming a continued depression, or "crevasse," from the head of the Jordan near Mount Hermon, to its embouchure at this place, and giving rise to the very natural impression, that the waters of that river once flowed down by this channel direct into the Gulf of Akaba. Subsequent and more exact examination has, however, shown, that this is an erroneous idea, the level of the Dead Sea being, in fact, lower than that of the Gulf of Akaba ; the Wady el Arabah besides, being clearly divided into two slopes, rising from the Red Sea northward to a definable point, and then *descending*, by a longer and deeper declivity, to the lower level of the Dead Sea. On the subject of this division of the waters, and the point where it occurs, I shall make a few remarks hereafter.

On leaving Akaba the valley appears nearly level, or slightly ascending, and, judging by the eye, some three miles or more in width from the mountains on its western side, which support the plateau of the great high desert El Tih, to those on the eastern, which are much bolder in formation, and form the outworks of the

mountain fastnesses of Edom, through which was a road to Petra, the capital, abounding in strong posts, the ruins of which have been described by Laborde, on his return journey from that place. The Wady el Arabah itself, is a scorching and sultry desert, very toilsome to traverse ; yet from very early times it was the highway from Ezion-Geber and Elath to different stations in Palestine, for the caravans bearing the riches of the East. When the Israelites were refused admission through the strong and well-guarded mountain territory of Edom, they were compelled to make a circuit around it, and thus fall upon the territory of the Moabites. Robinson supposes that the point whence they ascended from the Arabah, for this purpose of "compassing Edom," was by Wady el Ithm, to the east of Akaba. A reference to the Map will render these remarks more interesting and intelligible to the reader.

We encamped this evening at sunset among hillocks of sand, worked up by the action of the winds, and adorned with wild tamarisk. Escaped from Akaba and its squabbles, I enjoyed a calm satisfaction ; we were fairly on our way, and upon calculation I found that, by pushing on, I might spend two or three days at Petra, and return in time to meet the Mecca caravan on its way across the Desert, a cherished object which I was fortunately in the end enabled to accomplish.

October 29. Still ascending the Arabah, and, like the Israelites of old in the same region, "much discouraged because of the way." The sands are deep, the climate sultry, and the holes of "fiery serpents and scorpions," unpleasantly abundant ; though, as it happened, we fell in with neither. The principal object of our boy-sheik, Muhammed, seemed to be to make the shortest possible journeys. About three o'clock, coming to a place abounding in shrubs, he proceeded to unload his camel, the whole tribe of savage conductors declaring this to be the *only* spot where forage was to be had ; but as I proceeded quietly forward, my Alawin guides, though very indignant, were compelled to follow, until, after marching till near sunset, we came to a halt at a station equally eligible in all respects. It is necessary to be very determined with these men, or they soon

become your masters; had I given way to them I should have returned just too late to meet the caravan. On the second evening that we encamped in the burning Arabah, we were joined by sundry wild retainers of our sheik: one of these, named Maganhem, had such an air of intelligence and honesty, that I at once adopted him as body-guard and cicerone to all the localities of Mount Hor and Petra. He afterwards returned with us to the same spot, where I dismissed him with a pouch of well-merited piastres, and sketched his portrait at parting.

A CICERONE AT PETRA.

I preceded the camels on foot, anxious for a sight of the mountains of Petra, which I knew could not now be very far distant. At length, early on the third morning, from a rising ground at the point culminant of the Arabah, they rose finely to the eastward;

stern and wild, with the dark jagged peaks of Mount Hor like a lonely beacon projecting into the Desert waste. With what a thrill of pleasure one catches sight of any of these old historic mountains, whose venerable names have mingled with our earliest associations, Lebanon, and Carmel, and Tabor—what a poetry hangs about them! Mount Seir, the fastnesses of Edom, the hold of the "dwellers in the rock," looked wild and desolate, as though the ban of prophetic denunciation still rested on its blighted crags; and it was with indescribable, and almost painful excitement, not unmingled with awe, that I hastened towards their sombre defiles. We passed an old tower on an isolated rock, a tomb or guard-house, on the approach to the difficult and easily-defended pass which gives access to Petra, and about noon reached the entrance of the ravine (Wady A'bchebe) which leads up to it. Our caravan toiled painfully along the dried bed of the torrent, encumbered with rocks, and with the unchecked luxuriance of the oleander trees, covered in their season with their thousand flowers of brilliant crimson: there were traces of ancient constructions, at different points, along this once bustling highway to the great emporium of Edom. We descended from our camels, and their burdens being more equally divided, toiled up the pass on foot. Another caravan, four days from Gaza, preceded us; its conductors gazed at us with the ignorant curiosity of savages, and we fraternised with them around a spring, where, crouching down without respect of persons, we drank a few palmfuls of the precious element; and thus refreshed, pushed on, leaving our groaning camels to come up at their leisure. From the summit of the peak is a boundless Desert prospect; after that a gradual descent, leading a short distance from the base of Mount Hor.

The first view of this hoary peak was almost fearfully wild. At a distance, near its foot, appeared a huge black mass, which we could not at first make out; on nearer approach it proved to be the carcase of a camel, which had recently died, as have thousands before him, from exhaustion, after traversing this most ancient and rugged commercial pass. The vultures of Mount Seir had but newly scented their prey, and, to the number of some twenty, were so

deeply engaged in their feast, that they would not stir till we were close upon them, then, flapping their huge dun wings, they rose reluctantly and slowly, wheeling off to a short distance, and standing in dark groups, impatiently waiting until the intruders had passed, and they could return to complete the work their horrid instinct prompted. The camel's mouth was open, an expression of pain was upon his sunken visage, his eyes had already been picked from their ghastly sockets, the blood had gushed from his body, and lay in a dark pool upon the ground, a hideous spectacle! The stern and isolated peaks of the mountain, with the traditional tomb of Aaron, rose behind. Here we came to a halt, Komeh declaring it impossible for the camels to proceed further; we were besides but two hours' distance from Petra, the object of our long pilgrimage.

Before proceeding further, it may be well to recall briefly the scanty historical notices of this long-lost city, and the romantic incidents of its discovery and recent explorations.

Its origin is hidden in dim, remote antiquity, and its records are vague and scanty. Edom itself, the mountain region extending from Moab to the Red Sea, was occupied at the period of the Exodus by the descendants of Esau, who had themselves expelled the Horites, the original inhabitants; and when the Israelites, having penetrated to the borders of their territory, on their way to the Promised Land, sought permission to pass through it, it was refused them, and a bitter hostility seems ever afterwards to have prevailed between the children of Esau and of Jacob. At a later period, David made himself master of the country, and Solomon established at Ezion-Geber, already, perhaps, a trading-port, a naval station, whence he dispatched his fleets to Ophir. The Jews, however, could not hold permanent possession of Edom, though, after a temporary revolt, Amaziah captured one of their chief cities, (Sela, Rock-Petra,) and changed its name to Joktheel. In their turn, the Edomites, during the declining power of Judah, held possession of a portion of her territory, but were reduced by the Maccabees; and Idumea, by which name was included Edom and the southern part of Palestine, was governed by Jewish prefects. Meanwhile, but at

C. Cousen

Mount Hor

what period is uncertain, the Edomites would seem to have been expelled from the southern part of their own territory, and from their chief city, by the Nabathæans, another nomadic Arabian tribe, who had spread themselves from the Euphrates to the borders of Palestine, and who gradually established the kingdom of Arabia Petræa, which subsisted in nominal independence till reduced by Trajan to the Roman sway. There are various notices of Arabia Petræa and its rulers in Josephus. Antigonus, one of Alexander's successors, after reducing Syria and Palestine, sent also an expedition against this mountain kingdom; Athenæus, its leader, succeeded in surprising the city, during the absence of the men at a mask; but was, in his turn, surprised, and routed with great loss, and, on a second attack, the inhabitants, being forewarned, placed their wealth in a place of security, and dispersed into the fastnesses of the mountains. One of the sovereigns of Arabia Petræa, Aretas, mentioned by St. Paul, had even succeeded in obtaining temporary possession of Damascus, by defeating the army of Herod Antipas, the Jewish monarch, and profiting by the weakness and distraction of the Roman government in Syria.

The commerce of Petra is, doubtless, of very ancient origin. Dr. Vincent, in his "Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients," says: "The caravans, in all ages, from Minea, in the interior of Arabia, and from Gerrha, on the Gulf of Persia, from Hadramant, on the ocean, and some even from Labea, in Yemen, appear to have pointed to Petra as a common centre; and from Petra the trade seems to have again branched out into every direction, to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, through Arsinoe, Gaza, Tyre, Jerusalem, Damascus, and a variety of intermediate routes, all terminating on the Mediterranean. There is every proof that is requisite to show that the Tyrians and Sidonians were the first merchants who introduced the produce of India to all the nations which encircled the Mediterranean; so is there the strongest evidence to prove that the Syrians obtained all their commodities from Arabia. But if Arabia was the centre of this commerce, Petra was the point to which all the Arabians tended from the three sides of their vast

peninsula." Strabo says that the merchandise of India and Arabia was transported from Leuke Kome, (see Map,) an emporium of the Nabathæans, on the east coast of the Ælanitic Gulf, by camels to Petra, and thence distributed to Rhinocolura (El Arish) and other places. Military posts were established along the principal roads, of one of which, from Ailah (Akaba) to Petra, through the mountains of Edom, east of the Arabah, traces were found by Laborde, with the sites of ruined towns, as was also its continuation to Damascus by Burckhardt, and Irby and Mangles.

Under the Romans, this commerce still continued to exist and flourish; indeed, it is to this period, or that immediately preceding it, that we must refer the more splendid monuments of Petra, which, like those of Palmyra, were the results of wealth accruing from a long-established and successful, but more ancient, commercial route between the East and the West. On the question as to how far back may go the origin of the simpler and ruder of those monuments, their respective dates, and whether, as Irby and Mangles suppose, the peculiar architecture of many may be deemed an original invention, or rather suggested by their intercourse with other countries, more light yet remains, perhaps, to be thrown. Christianity appears to have spread through this region, and Petra was established as the metropolitan see of the province of Palestina Tertia. Ailah, which supplanted the ancient Ezion-Geber, Feiran, which, as we have already stated, was supposed from an early period to have been a station on a commercial route frequented by the Tyrians, or, perhaps, the Idumeans, also about this period became the seat of Christian communities. Whatever may have been the religion of the nomadic tribes that wandered, from time immemorial, about the Desert, whether they yet retained the Sabean sidereal worship, or became, in any measure, converts to Christianity, is hidden in the same darkness that now rapidly gathers over all the subsequent annals of this land. Mohammedanism at length seems to have swept over the whole region, and to have united the different Arab tribes into a temporary fanaticism, which has given place in modern times, to a cold and nominal profession of Islamism. The

Christian communities, at first exempted by tribute from the invasion of their liberties, appear at length, whether from persecution, or the general decay of the country, to have perished from the land, and have left no trace of their former establishment but the solitary convent of Mount Sinai, which the security of walls, and the tribute to the surrounding Arabs, has preserved from the general ruin. Among the rest, Petra, the gorgeous, appears to have sunk, after its many ages of splendour, into the long night of its final ruin. Alexandria had now become the centre of the trade between the East and the West; the establishment of the ports of Berenice and Coptos on the Red Sea obviated the necessity of the dangerous navigation of its upper extremity, and from thence, by caravans, the wealth of the East was transferred to the Nile, and thus conveyed to the great emporium: various causes combined to divert the course of trade into other channels, and the name and place of Petra faded from the business and memory of the world: when it was abandoned, and what became of its Christian inhabitants is unknown; but for centuries that nomadic life which preceded its original foundation, and has outlived its career of prosperity, has spread again, and for ever, over its vacant and mournful area.

Such was its condition when the Crusaders, who mention the site as Vallis Moysi—the Wady Mousa of the Arabs—penetrated the fastnesses of ancient Edom, and built the fortresses of Shobek and Kerak,* (the latter site then supposed to be that of Petra), which gave them the command of the caravan route from Damascus to Mecca. This led to fierce attacks from the Saracens, which were finally successful, and thus the whole region, with all its strongholds, again became subject to their power.

From that period to our own times the name and site of Petra appear to have been forgotten. The pilgrim to Mount Sinai, and thence to Jerusalem, in the middle ages, deviated not from the direct route across the Desert, already long and dangerous enough; and the traveller, content with advancing to the outskirts of the Promised Land, beheld from afar Mount Hor, jutting out like a beacon from

* For fuller details, see Robinson, Bib. Res., vol. ii.

the desolate mountains of Edom, without seeking to penetrate a country tenanted by the most savage and faithless of the Bedouins, little supposing, too, that, at its very foot, in an almost inaccessible solitude, lay hidden that ancient capital whose singular situation and utter overthrow form the burden of Jewish prophecy. It was even, perhaps, with incredulous wonder that he listened to the reports of his Arab guides, who spoke of the numerous ruined sites among which he was wont to pasture his wandering flocks—of the past splendour of those fallen cities which even the rude Bedouin could not behold unmoved: "Oh, how I weep," said Sectzen's Arab guide to him, "when I behold the ruins of Wady Musa!" The first visits made by modern travellers were of a highly adventurous and romantic character. To the lamented Burckhardt we owe the first reliable notices of the long-lost city. Adopting the name of Sheik Ibrahim, and clad in the garb of a poor Arab, he was the first to explore its wonders, and his involuntary surprise and curiosity nearly led to the discovery of his assumed character. As he turned aside to examine more narrowly one of the principal monuments, his guide exclaimed, "I see now, clearly, that you are an infidel, who have particular business amongst the ruins of the city of your forefathers; but, depend upon it, that we shall not suffer you to take out a single para of all the treasures hidden therein, for they are in our territory, and belong to us." He was compelled to desist from a closer examination without effecting his pilgrimage to the summit of Mount Hor, to the reputed tomb of the patriarch Aaron, which had served as the pretext of his visit. "It is very unfortunate," he observes, "that the idea of treasures being hidden in ancient edifices is so strongly rooted in the minds of the Arabs and Turks. Nor are they satisfied with watching all the stranger's steps; they believe that it is sufficient for a true magician to have seen and observed the spot where treasures are hidden, (of which he is supposed to be already informed by the old books of the infidels who lived on the spot,) in order to be able afterwards, at his ease, to command the guardian of the treasure to set the whole before him. It was of no avail to tell them to follow me, and see whether I searched

for money. Their reply was, 'Of course, you will not dare to take it out before us; but we know that, if you are a skilful magician, you will order it to follow you through the air to whatever place you please.'"

Considering the hasty and furtive manner in which Burckhardt was compelled to hurry through the place, his account is surprisingly able and accurate, and of course created great excitement. Various travellers now made ineffectual attempts to penetrate to this surprising scene, but, for a while, without success. Messrs. Bankes, Legh, Irby, and Mangles were the first to overcome the many difficulties connected with such an expedition. It was natural that the Turkish authorities in Palestine should have little more than a nominal authority over regions so secluded that, on Mr. Bankes's application, when at Constantinople, to have the names of Kerek and Wady Musa inserted in his Firman, he was told "that they knew of no such places in the Grand Seignior's dominions." After one ineffectual attempt to penetrate them from Tiberias, by way of Szalt, and, by a skilful retreat, narrowly escaping the pursuit of the treacherous Arabs, these indefatigable travellers, finding the governor of Jerusalem unable to assist them, repaired to the frontier at Hebron; but still sought in vain for any Arabs who would undertake, for any consideration, to conduct them direct to Wady Musa; and their only course was to engage guides and proceed to Kerek. The sheik of this place received them at first but coldly, inquiring "if this was the country of their fathers?" but eventually engaged to conduct them to Wady Musa, for a stipulated sum for himself, besides a tribute to the other sheiks, through whose districts they might pass. Their progress was unpropitious, and it was fortunate that the Sheik of Shobek warmly espoused their cause, and threw into the trembling scale the weight of his influence and the force of his character Abou Raschid, this new ally, "was a middle-sized man, with very marked features, having a dark complexion, very dark beard, piercing black eyes, and aquiline nose. His age might be about thirty. He was full of life and spirits, but a man of few words, and of plain, unaffected manners. Ever since our arrival we had heard him spoken of

in great raptures at the camp." As soon as his resolution to conduct the Franks to Wady Musa was declared, Abou Zatoun, "the father of Olives," sheik of that place, declared, "by the beard of their prophet, and by the honour of their women," that they should never enter their territory; and, seeing them about to proceed, exclaimed, "Let the dogs go on and perish!" he then hurried away with his adherents to rouse the inhabitants and oppose their entry by force. This was a critical moment. Abou Yousuf and Salem, with their people, endeavoured to turn Abou Raschid from his purpose, but his resolution was unshaken; and, finding that his arguments were ineffectual, he leaped into the saddle, exclaiming, "I have set them on their horses; let us see who will dare to stop Abou Raschid!" All now advanced; the men of Wady Musa hovering on their flank, and watching their movements. On the way, other retainers of Abou Raschid joined them, and at sunset they reached a camp of sixty-eight tents. Angry messages passed between the rival camps, and a deputation arrived; but, after a warm and unsuccessful debate, the Wady Musa men, who had declared to the Franks at first that they were "trusting in the protection of the chief who accompanied them, or otherwise they should never have returned," (a menace which, considering the sanguinary character of this tribe, and that the place was pointed out where they had, the year before, treacherously murdered a caravan of pilgrims, would, but too probably, have been fulfilled,) retired to their camp. Matters now were becoming serious, reinforcements were gathering; and our travellers, alarmed at the prospect of kindling a war between the tribes, wished to renounce their object. But the sheik was decided; they should even *bathe* in the waters; and, if fair means could not compass this, he had sworn to accomplish it by force.

A consultation was held, in which the other sheiks tried to dissuade Abou Raschid from carrying the matter further. "Old Yousul particularly, like Nestor in the Iliad, dwelt much upon what had passed in his youth, and upon the wars in which he had engaged, and found reason, when too late, to repent of. He spoke with a great deal of grave action, but his counsels had more effect upon the

rest of his audience than upon the spirited young Arab to whom they were addressed." Everything now breathed war; until a rumour arose that from the influence of Hindi, an old Arab chief of very poor and ordinary appearance, and almost blind, no further opposition would be offered to the travellers.

But the morrow brought other tidings. The men of Wady Musa had, in the plainest terms, declared that they would oppose the Franks by main force, and that they should pay with their lives for any attempt to advance within their limits. Hostilities thus seemed unavoidable. Some neighbouring tribes had declared for the people of Wady Musa; even old Yousuf, though still advocating prudence, seemed kindling. He, too, could bring out, he said, the men of Kerek; and he spoke of their numbers and courage. But, in the meantime, old Hindi had been busy, and the enemy was probably overawed. The travellers had discovered that one of the ruins was in sight, and believed that they might steal down upon them in the night without giving the alarm; but while they were debating this plan, they saw a great cavalcade entering their camp from the southward; there were many mounted Arabs with lances, and they observed some horsemen, of a more splendid appearance than ordinary Bedouins. As the procession advanced, several of Abou Raschid's Arabs went out and led the horses of the chiefs by the bridles into the camp; the whole procession alighted at the tent of the chief, and kissed his turban: this was the signal of pacification; peace was immediately proclaimed throughout the camp, and notice was given that the men bearing arms, who had come from a distance, were to return to their respective homes.

Such was the fortunate issue of this remarkable adventure. Abou Raschid continued with the party during their two days' stay in Petra, and escorted them on their return as far as his camp near Kerek, where they took leave of their intrepid friend and ally, who sent his mace-bearer with his iron mace before them to Kerek, to ensure for them the same reception as though he had been himself present. He kissed them all at parting.

The accurate notes of Irby and Mangles were at first printed for

private circulation; and it was not till ten years afterwards, in 1828, that Count Leon de Laborde, with M. Linant, succeeded, in the face of much hostility, in passing such a space of time among the ruins, as enabled them, with wonderful industry, to obtain the materials for the splendid work which first introduced Petra to the European public. Since that period a few others have occasionally braved the perils of the desert route, and submitted to the extortion of their Arab guides, as well as those of the savage tribes who, pasturing their flocks in the neighbourhood, come down to levy contributions on the defenceless traveller. Some, whose object was merely to imprint on the memory a hasty, but still ineffaceable, impression of the spot, have succeeded, so solitary and forsaken is the place, in entering, and making good their retreat, ere the plunderers could obtain intelligence and intercept them; as was the case with Stephens, whose lively account of his adventures is in every one's recollection. Some of his countrymen, however, were not so fortunate, but had a narrow escape from these ruffian extortioners. Drs. Robinson and Smith, after gaining sufficient time for a hasty survey, were beset by the identical old sheik who was at the bottom of all the troubles of Irby and Mangles, and were prevented from completing a more minute examination, had they desired it, as well as from ascending Mount Hor, on their return. The Arabs demanded no less than a thousand piastres, (ten pounds,) and even talked of sending away the camels with which their Jehalin guides had furnished the travellers at Hebron, to exchange for their own. This, however, was an empty threat; but when the party, determined to yield to force alone, endeavoured to advance in the direction of Mount Hor, "the hostile party, at a signal from Abu Zeitun, instantly closed round, and swords were drawn and brandished; which, however, among these Arabs, as we had now learned, means nothing more than to make a flourish. The heads of our camels were seized, and turned in the opposite direction, with orders to go by the way we came. Not a step, my companion cried, except by force; and dismounting, he stood up before them, and told them, we now knew them to be robbers, and were ready

for them; let them rob and kill us if they chose, but not a para more of money should they get than we had offered them. They replied that not for a para less than a thousand piastres should we go to Mount Hor. Our resolute Komeh next seized the halter of the head camel, and tried to go on as before, but with no better success. He then, in great wrath, threw down his gun, and pistol, and pipe on the ground before them, (the pipe was shivered in pieces,) declaring them to be thieves and robbers, and calling on them to take possession of his arms, and all that they had." My worthy companion, Komeh, had often alluded to this scene of tumult, in which he so prominently figured, exaggerating, in true oriental style, the numbers of the Bedouins, though his own courage certainly stood in no need of any such additional illustration. It may well be supposed, that with a knowledge of the difficulties which had thus beset previous travellers, it was not without some uneasiness that I found myself in the immediate vicinity of the object of my long anticipation. I had indeed heard, that recent travellers had paid a 'gufr,' or tax, of about one hundred piastres; but it seemed but too probable, that could the Sheik of Wady Musa gain intelligence of my arrival in time to intercept me, he would be tempted to take advantage of a solitary stranger, and to levy some inordinate contribution. I determined, therefore, if possible, to be beforehand with him; sufficient daylight remained to pay a hasty visit to Mount Hor, and before sunrise the following morning, I would steal unperceived into the forsaken area of Petra itself, and ere I could be interrupted, visit all the prominent objects of curiosity, after which I should be able to defy any attempt at serious extortion.

This resolution had just been formed, when the camels came toiling down the mountain side. Leaving Komeh to pitch the tent and make all snug for my return, I started at once, Maganhem, our new and intelligent ally, and another Arab serving as guides. We began the ascent almost directly from the place where we had determined to halt for the night, after accomplishing our task: the way up on this side seemed particularly easy and inviting, but

became much less so as we advanced, gaps and ravines before unseen developing themselves very provokingly to people in haste ; none of them, however, presented any serious obstacle ; and we struck at length at a sharp angle into the pathway, formerly built rudely up the mountain side for the use of pilgrims, which, though rugged, was surmounted at a rapid pace, and in less than an hour we stood on a small level plain, at the foot of the central mass of crags, which, towering above, surmounted by the tomb, gives so peculiar a character to the distant physiognomy of this mountain. Here we passed a cavity, with a rude pallet, which serves as a hermitage for the old sheik of the mountain, who claims the exclusive privilege of being guide and priest to pious Mahommedan pilgrims coming up here occasionally to pay their devotions, as they do frequently in Palestine, at the reputed tombs of Old Testament saints and worthies ; and as very few but Mahommedan pilgrims ever come, he is the guide to all :—unfortunately for him, although not for ourselves, he was elsewhere. We hastened forward, and in a few moments, making a sharp turn, ascended through a cleft in the crags, assisted by steps, towards the summit, when I perceived, by a yawning orifice, through which I had nearly fallen, that we were passing over some singular subterranean vaults, the examination of which was postponed till our descent. Immediately from hence a staircase, very deeply and carefully cut, though broken away in parts, leads up to the topmost crag, which affords little more than space enough for the small tomb, or mosque, which stands upon its narrow area. Here we caught sight of some gazelles upon the rocks, at a short distance ; Maganhem, with a sign to myself to imitate him, crouched down and crept along close to the surface in order to obtain a better aim ; the graceful creatures stood a moment half-startled, then bounded lightly from stone to stone, till they disappeared among the cliffs ; the Arabs had missed fire.

Mount Hor, as I have before observed, and as an inspection of the map will show, juts out in a singular manner, like an advanced post of the mountains of Edom ; and from its isolated peak, the eye plunges, down the rugged ribs of the mountain itself, into a maze

of fathomless defiles, which advancing out for some miles from the great central range, or backbone, of the country, and sinking gradually to the broad Wady el Arabah, form the ancient territory of Edom, well styled in Scripture a "nest in the rocks;"—a natural fortification, inclosing narrow valleys of difficult access, all of which are unseen from this airy perch, as the canals of Venice are concealed from the view of a spectator who looks over the city from the Campanile or any other elevated point. Of this wilderness of craggy summits, some are sharp and jagged, without footing for a gazelle; others are buttressed and built up as if by art, in huge square piles, rising from a narrow table-land; while the great central range from which they project, is quite dissimilar in appearance, being rounded and smooth, and covered with fine pasturage, proverbially excellent. All these peculiarities appear in the view I have annexed.

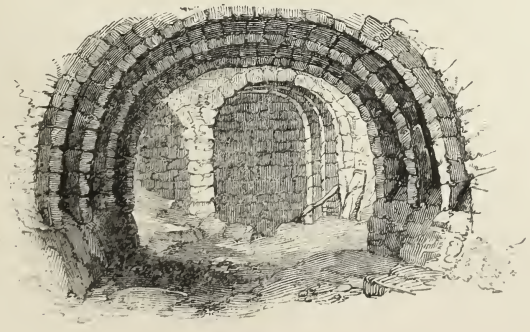
These hidden valleys might be deemed at first sight entirely sterile, but when we see that the soil, though scanty, is rich, and that every here and there little portions of table-land are scattered about, and when we find on all sides the remains of channels cut in the rocks for the purposes of irrigation, we may fairly infer that at one time they well repaid by their fertility the exertions and expenditure of a once numerous, energetic, and wealthy community.

This mass of mountains formed the right-hand or eastern portion of the view; on the opposite or western side was the great parallel plateau of the high western Desert el Tih, outstretched in desolation to the cloudy distance, and rising gradually higher and higher to the north, where it merges into the hill-ranges which defend Palestine on its southern side. Sunk between Edom and the western Desert, is the Wady el Arabah, a broad bed of sand which the wind was working up into vast driving clouds—this drains the high Desert and here takes an evident slope to the northward, till lost in the dim white haze of the Dead Sea, faintly descried behind the peaks of the right-hand mountains. The direction of El Weibeh (Kadesh-Barnea, if Robinson is right) was pointed out by my Arab guide.

Standing on this lone, lofty pinnacle, it is impossible not to figure to ourselves the important biblical events connected with it. Edom stood secure, though trembling, in her mountain fastnesses, the Promised Land was yet occupied by its original inhabitants, linked by a common danger to resist the invasion of the wanderers from Egypt, and to drive them back into the inhospitable Desert; the Israelites had assembled at Kadesh, and, with their courage quailed by the discouraging reports of the spies, had been doomed to expiate their want of faith and to wander forty years through the wilderness. Those forty years had now done their work—that generation had passed away—and their descendants, children of the Desert, assemble at the base of the mount, and fill the broad plain with their tents: their passage through these mountain defiles is refused by the Edomites, and again we see them, in idea, departing southward, down the Arabah to the Red Sea, to turn the region that they might not penetrate. But a short time before, the great lawgiver had buried, at Kadesh, his sister Miriam, whose triumphant song had commemorated their first great deliverance; and now Aaron, too, was called to his rest—the prophet brothers ascend the lonely mount, and on its summit take the long and last farewell: Aaron is buried, and the aged Moses descends alone, and desolate in heart, to the tents of the mourning Israelites. So strongly marked are the features of this region, and so preserved by their sublime unchanging barrenness, that when we behold at once the defiles of Edom, the frontier hills of Palestine, the Arabah, and, far outstretched to the westward, the great sepulchral wilderness, the lapse of ages is forgotten, and these touching and solemn events rise up before the mind with an almost startling reality.

I now eagerly inquired for the position of Petra, Maganhem pointed to a spot, exclaiming, "Wady Musa, Wady Musa!" but I could see nothing, till suddenly my eye caught upon a remarkable architectural façade, hitherto overlooked, and which, isolated and standing in no visible connexion with other buildings, had a most singular, and to one previously unacquainted with the different sites, a very mysterious appearance. This I saw at once to be El Deir, a

large excavation in the mountains above Petra, which Irby and Mangles could not reach. Of the city itself, nothing could be made out. Shobek, famous in the times of the Crusaders, as a strong fortress, by some supposed to be the real Petra, and Kerek, lie far to the north, among these hills ; but I was unable to make out either. Maganhem now, with an expression of deep reverence, pointed the way into the traditional tomb of Aaron. It is simply a square plain room, in which, opposite the entrance, stands a small tomb, similar to those seen in Mahommedan cemeteries, and covered with a tattered pall. Being unprovided with torches, we were prevented from exploring the subterraneous vault ; besides, the sun was now nearly setting, and it was not desirable to be overtaken by darkness on these heights. Reaching again, on the descent, the curious substruction before alluded to, I immediately commenced a hasty survey. It is a covered vault of round arches, well constructed, with, if I remember right, a well ; possibly it might have supported upper apartments, now destroyed. This I could not positively determine ; but it appeared to me to have been a religious edifice of some nature, perhaps a cell, or a part of a small convent, which might have been tenanted, in the ages of Christian occupation, by a few monks, to whom probably the cutting of the steps above and pathway may be attributed. The constructions, I afterwards found, much resembled the arched vaults built out in front of the large tomb in Petra, nearly opposite the theatre, which was converted into a church, and may be well judged of by the annexed illustration.



Night was now gathering over the wilderness, and we hurried down the mountain. At first we could not tell what had become of Komeh and his train, the open space where we had left him being vacant; but the glare of a fire from out of a narrow ravine told me at once, that he had wisely hidden our tent from the observation of larger caravans that might be passing, and that might perhaps give us trouble. A wilder nook could hardly be met with. Above the tent rose a high wall of rock; below, yawned a rugged chasm, with scarcely room to pass along its brink, and Mount Hor dimly reared its ancient peaks directly in front of us. We were in a high region of the mountain, the wind was gusty and cold, and I was glad to sit by the fire with the Arabs, and pore over that unforgotten landmark of remote ages with all its solemn memories.

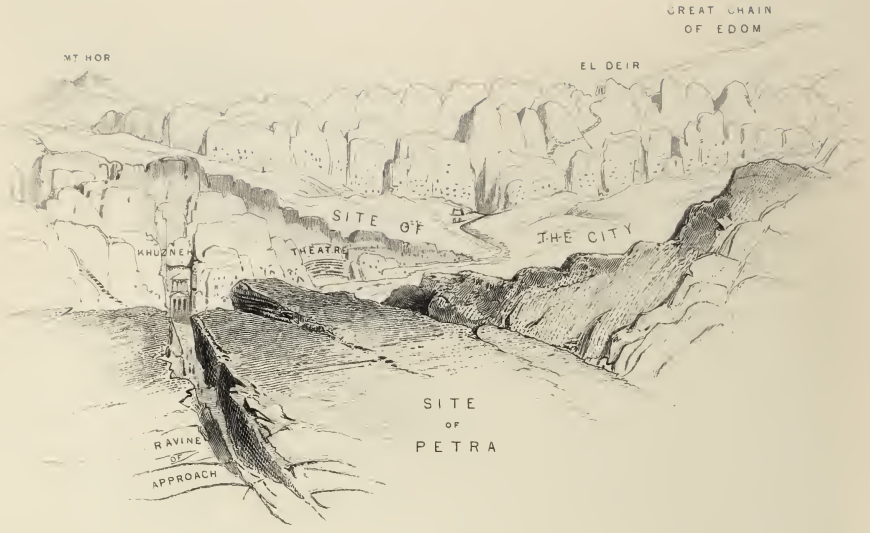
Anticipation troubles one's rest; the cold of our bleak bivouac did not improve it; and thus, long before sunrise, accompanied by Maganhem, and leaving Komeh to follow with the camels, I was hurrying along the rocky road towards Petra. From a solitary group of tombs, the outskirts of its vast necropolis, I obtained my first view of the rock-bound city—a broken-down camel, one of a passing caravan, protesting against an insupportable load, which at the expense of his last remaining strength he had dragged up the long ascent, was a characteristic object in the foreground. (See title-page.) This narrow pass was probably guarded in the palmy days of Petra, and blocked up when an attack was expected. Hence begins a long descent by the side of a ravine, leading to the vacant site of the old city, of which one solitary column appears like the ghost of its past splendour, girdled round by rocks of the most rugged and fantastic outline, and pierced with innumerable excavations, their colouring, as it were, run mad with a blending of all hues. No idea can be given of the first impression of such a place,—its strangeness and remoteness, the utter desolation, the silence, broken only by the groans of the distressed, over-burdened camels, and the fierce yells of their savage conductors. My plan had perfectly succeeded, the sheik and his retainers had not appeared; there was nothing to mar the glorious satisfaction of wandering alone and unin-

terrupted about this unparalleled place; my wild cicerone, as I merely named the principal objects of interest, conducted me to them in silence, and I spent some hours in exploring all the lower parts of the city. At length, we began to think it was time to look after Komeh and the camels. From a lofty rock above the theatre, we looked around the void area of the city, expecting to catch sight of the tent, pitched by the stream, but it was nowhere visible. I was uneasy: had anything happened? or had the sheik and his men intercepted Komeh on his way? We set up a loud shout, and Maganhem, firing his rusty matchlock, awoke the echoes of the rocky cliffs; it was responded to by another discharge and loud outcries; and the figures of the Arabs now first became visible beneath one of the principal excavations, from which issued a curling smoke that feelingly appealed to a famished stomach. Thither we hurried, and found that it was in the magnificent Corinthian tomb that Komeh had arranged matters for our temporary abode. On climbing its broken portal, the first object that struck me, was, the uplifted chin of one of the most truculent looking and hirsute of our Arabs, covered with lather, relieving white from the gloom, and Komeh, armed with my razor, placidly endeavouring to reduce the overgrowth of his shaggy hair, an operation about as promising as the shaving of a rock-goat. The fellow, however, who had caught the trick from witnessing my own performances, seemed infinitely delighted, and looked at his half-shorn visage in a bit of broken looking-glass, with as much complacency as a D'Orsay. Others, improving on their old process of broiling on the stones, came to borrow our cooking-pot:—in short civilization is progressing, even in Petra. On a heap of stones, artistically built up as a fire-place, was an Irish stew, just ready, and my mattress-couch spread out upon the swept floor of the tomb, and the chattels stowed away in the corners. Komeh had made all snug, and rubbed his hands, and looked around him like a man who had done his duty; and, to add to our satisfaction, the Sheik of Wady-Musa, with his band of ragamuffins, had not even yet appeared. But this security was not of long continuance; for before I had

well finished a hasty repast, a suspicious-looking column of horsemen was seen rapidly approaching, which, on being reconnoitred closely, was pronounced to be the party we dreaded. I hurried off with Maganhem in the opposite direction to El Deir; and now, having both visited Mount Hor, and seen everything in Petra, I returned secure and triumphant to the tomb. Here the sheik and his men, the most savage, sinister, and noisy of all the Arabs we had seen, were in high clamour; to do him justice, however, he was to me exceedingly respectful, not to say humble in his tone; in fact, I had the weather-gauge of him; his demands were confined to the gufr, or tax of one hundred piastres, (£1,) which, as he averred, all recent travellers had paid, and for which sum he promised an entire freedom from all annoyance by his retainers. I did not pay even this, which, after all, is an extortion, without protesting; but it is right to say that he fulfilled his promise to the letter; and that, during the remainder of my stay, I went about with Maganhem alone, without being pestered for "backshish," or otherwise intruded upon by these loathsome ruffians: an immunity certainly well worth the consideration I had been called upon to pay for it.

Petra, since first brought to light by Burckhardt, has been well and often described; and all the details of its buildings have been drawn with great, and subsequently unsurpassed accuracy, by Laborde and Linant; Dr. Robinson's remark, however, is quite just, that their work conveys "no good general idea of the whole." To do this, if possible at all, is, in fact, no easy task. That in which Laborde has failed I cannot hope to accomplish successfully; nevertheless, true to my plan of *pictorial* description, I shall endeavour to give a more general, though of course imperfect, idea of the entire site, and then take the various monuments one by one in their natural order of succession from a given point.

If the traveller could soar, like one of their native eagles, over the inaccessible cliffs which hem in this extraordinary city, it might present some such appearance as I have ventured to suppose in the accompanying outline, which, of course, makes no claim to exact


GREAT CHAIN
OF EDOM
MT HOR
EL DEIR
SITE OF
THE CITY
KHUZNEH
THEATRE
SITE
OF
PETRA
RAVINE
OF
APPROACH


GROUND PLAN OF
P E T R A
Scale
0 500 1000 2000 Feet
el-Deir
Ruined Staircase
to el-Deir
Basilica
Arch
Bridge
Theatre
Great range of tombs
el-Khuzneh
Ravine of approach

accuracy, and is intended solely to *assist* the conception of the reader by comparison with the annexed map.

In this bird's-eye view, we are supposed to be looking down into the lower part of the ravine, which formed one principal approach, though not, as usually supposed, the only one. We can trace its course across the area of the city, till it disappears in the other side of the valley. Approaching by this narrow chasm, the first object that meets the eye, is the rock-hewn tomb or temple of El Khŭsné; passing in front of this, the stream flows down until it reaches the theatre, also hewn from the mountain, then bending at the end of the rocks, crosses the valley, washes the few ruins of the city still standing, and is finally lost to our view among the opposite cliffs. The open central space was the site of the city itself; there is a little level ground along the brink of the torrent, which we may suppose, was appropriated to the principal buildings, and to have been the chief place of concourse. On each side of this, the ground rises irregularly, divided by minor ravines, terminating in the north with the high mountains of Dibdibah, the central chain of Edom, and on the south, ascending gradually towards Mount Hor, and communicating on this side with the Arabah, by the pass already described, on the approach from which, another branch goes off towards Hebron. The entire area of ground, suitable for buildings, may have been about two to three miles of circumference, of course very irregular. Scattered about it are very numerous remains of former buildings; consisting, mostly, of heaps of stones and substructions, but including a few more important ruins, which we will take in detail. With this *general* view of the site, we will now begin a more exact description of the monuments successively, commencing at the head of the remarkable ravine already noticed.

The upper part of the approach along the course of the stream, which I did not see, is bordered by tombs, some of very singular character. The valley is rather open, but soon the brook descends among huge blocks of stone, overgrown with wild oleanders, almost blocking up the passage, into the deep ravine, which piercing through the chain of rocks, forms the only entrance to the city on this side.

But a few paces beyond its entry, a ruined yet bold arch, springing from rock to rock, creates astonishment that it can maintain its position. The sides are adorned with niches and pilasters. This arch was perhaps erected to commemorate some victory, or may have served merely an ornamental purpose.

The sandstone formations which hem in the ravine at this arch, are of no great height, probably about one hundred feet ; but at every step they rise higher and higher, while the broken path beneath descends rapidly among fragments and wild plants, which hardly leave a roadway, and when unencumbered could never have admitted more than two or three camels abreast. It is impossible to convey an idea of the feeling with which we penetrate further into the heart of this extraordinary defile : the cliffs become more jagged and awful, nearly meeting over head, and the windings of the chasm seem to close up at every turn of the almost subterranean passage. Looking up from this deep abyss are seen, through occasional openings, the higher precipices of the gorge ; their peaks, ragged and fantastic, tinted with the most fanciful variety of colouring in pink, yellow, and blue veins, and hung with wild oleander, tamarisk, and climbing plants, are glittering several hundreds of feet above us, in the brilliant sunlight. There is one sinister turn in the deepest part of the passage, which seems temptingly fitted for deeds of violence and blood ; the shadows fall blacker from the almost closing walls of rock ; a sharp angle in the ravine seems formed for enabling the treacherous assailant to fall unexpectedly upon his victim ; and here it was, in fact, that, the year before the visit of Irby and Mangles, a party of pilgrims from Barbary were murdered by the Arabs of Wady Musa, men who appeared capable of any atrocity likely to go unpunished ; and whom I never could look at without a lurking tremor. Awful as is this gorge, it is yet still more romantically beautiful, the forms of the precipices varying at every turn, the wonderful contrasts of the colouring, the variety of the overhanging foliage of the wild fig, the crimson-flowered oleander, and the trailing bright-green plants, with the play of light and shade among the rocks, form such a striking succession of pictures, that the

wanderer lingers delighted among the thousand charms which nature unfolds in this singular recess, and almost forgets, as he forces his difficult way among fallen rocks and tangled shrubs and flowers, that he is traversing the principal highway into what was heretofore one of the richest commercial cities in the East.

On close examination, however, this passage, though now half choked up, shows vestiges of the care with which it was kept open in the prosperous times of Petra. The traces of the square stones with which it was once paved are met with, as well as of the channel by which the water of the brook was carried down into the city, instead of being suffered to pour in full volume, as at present, down the bed of the ravine ; this channel, crossing the passage from left to right, is continued by earthen pipes bedded by mortar in a groove made in the rocks. Robinson suggests that the great body of the water was, perhaps, anciently carried off in some different way. Only a portion, not sufficient to injure the pavement, could, at any rate, have taken its course down the natural channel into the city below. There occur, besides, niches and tablets here and there.

This half-subterraneous, echoing passage, continues for more than a mile, turning and winding, and everywhere impressed with the same sombre, yet fascinating character. At length, a rosy-coloured rock appears between the grey perpendicular walls of the chasm ; pediments and statues gradually are seen, until, on reaching abruptly the termination of the approach, the entire façade of the principal edifice in Petra bursts upon the view ; the effect of which, as thus beheld, with the light full upon it, is utterly indescribable. The architects of Petra must, indeed, have had a wonderful eye for the picturesque ; and with consummate skill have they here availed themselves of the level face of a vast cliff, in a small opening, opposite the mouth of their chief approach, to dazzle the stranger, as he emerged from the long shady chasm, with the most beautiful of their rock-hewn unique monuments—most fortunate, too, were they in its material, for the exquisite rosy tint of the stone, contrasting with the gloomy masses around, adds to the beauty of the architecture ;

and, from the superincumbent cliff and its sheltered situation, the most delicate details of the carving have escaped the weather, and are fresh as from yesterday's chisel, while those in more exposed places in the city are often quite defaced and destroyed. The spot has all the strange, wild, magical beauty of those fantastic combinations which, in dreams, seem to transcend ordinary reality ; albeit, unlike those, it fades not from waking memory, but actually haunts the mind long after, and can no more be forgotten than it can be adequately described. Familiar as I previously was with it in idea, from so many views and descriptions, I reckoned as nothing the fatigue and privation which enabled me at length to behold it for myself.

The annexed view will show that the monument stands on a rising ground, in a small opening, at the meeting of the ravine of approach, already described, with another coming down to join it. This romantic little area is cut off from the city, and everywhere surrounded by impassable rocks, except where the ravine penetrates it to descend lower down ; the stream crosses it, and is overhung with a wild growth of oleander bushes, covered, at the time of our visit, by thousands of crimson flowers. With respect to the building itself, the illustration will save the trouble of a lengthened description. The style appears to have been an original combination of the later Roman architecture ; and though there may be a question as to its purity, there can be none as to its perfect adaptation to local peculiarities. It is by far the most elegant in proportion, as well as exquisite in finish, of all the monuments in Petra, and entirely hewn from the rock, with the exception of the two central pillars of the portico which were built up ; one of which, as it will be seen, has fallen in, though the effect is not impaired. The capitals and other decorative portions are not of the Corinthian, nor indeed of any other order, but original ; and the richness of their design, and the exquisite delicacy of their execution, leave nothing for the eye to desire. The figures on the upper part of the structure are much injured: that on the left-hand appears to be a statue of Victory ; the other an armed figure, in a warlike attitude ; while that on the lower panel, to the right of the main portico, is to

all appearance seated on a camel. The name given by the Arabs to the excavation "El-Khŭsne," signifies "the treasure," which is supposed by them to be contained in the large vase at the top, surmounting the central lantern. They often vainly fire at it, hoping to bring down its imaginary contents, and they fancy that the visits of Frank travellers are for the purpose of conjuring away to their own homes, by some ærial magic, what they are themselves unable to lay hold of. The portico, about thirty-five feet high, is deep and imposing, and richly decorated; it gives access by the central door into a large square chamber, its walls and ceiling perfectly plain, and unornamented, behind which is another smaller one. Two lateral doorways in the portico also open into similar apartments; the principal chamber is now inscribed with a pretty considerable number of names, principally from England and America.

The ravine, which seems as if it just opened to afford a suitable situation for this beautiful monument, now closes again for a while, and the cliffs are of less height; it then gradually opens a little, the rocks on either side, still towering and romantic, and still most beautiful in form and colouring, are hewn into numerous sepulchres, some of considerable size, and decorated with pilasters, rising irregularly one above another, as they follow the sinuous course of the rocks, half overgrown with wild vegetation. Among these tombs is the one with the Greek inscription, mentioned by Laborde. Still widening, and opening gradually, the rocky valley, making a bend to the left, suddenly displays another of the more striking monuments of Petra—the Theatre. Of this, also, and the surrounding scenery, the drawing will convey a better idea than any verbal description: the whole is carved out of the side of the valley: there are thirty-three ranges of seats, which are in a very tolerable state of preservation: there are also several niches, looking like boxes, in the wall above, as will appear from the drawing; The scena built up below has fallen in, and opened a view of the wild brook, murmuring through tangled tufts of oleanders at its foot, and passing out below to traverse the city. The Thea-

tre, facing the north-east, would have been in shadow towards evening, when the rich rays of the declining sun lighted up the immense mountainous barrier opposite, and its countless tombs of every size and variety: singular contrast! I need not enlarge upon the peculiar character of these monuments, as in the drawing I have endeavoured to give it accurately; some are chaste and simple in style, while others are more fantastic in ornament, and they are no doubt of different dates. Nor is it only in front of the theatre that the tombs appear, for it may be said to be literally surrounded on all sides by them; even from its topmost benches arise alleys and staircases hewn in the rock, by which access is given to the precipices above, all hollowed into sepulchral chambers; from these again other flights of steps, broken and difficult to follow or trace, lead higher and higher into remote rocky nooks and corners hidden from beneath, but still carved into sepulchres, if indeed they can all be so regarded.

Following one of these stairs, and ascending with some difficulty, to a considerable height above the theatre, I reached a crag, commanding a magnificent view of the site of the city and its girdle of rocks, which, I am inclined to think, cannot so well be seen from any other point. In this view some of the seats of the theatre appear below, on the right hand, as also the singular manner in which the rock from which it is hewn was cut into alleys of excavated chambers communicating with it. Still lower, the brook winds round the rocky point, taking a direction to the left across Wady Musa itself, till it disappears in a cleft among the piles of rock on the opposite side. The site of the city itself was along this brook; and the principal remaining edifices, viz., the Arch of Triumph and Kasr Pharoon, appear on the left-hand, near its point of disappearance. The irregular ground rising north and south was also, as is evident, both from the site and the scattered heaps of stones and foundations, (many of which appear in the drawings,) covered, wherever practicable, with the buildings of the ancient city. The immense mass of the rock, hemming in this area on the right, or north side, rises abrupt, rugged, and wild, built up, as it were, in vast irregular buttresses, the bases of

which are hewn into a variety of sepulchres. The left is pierced by different ravines ; by one of which ascent is made to El Deir, (not visible) and this range, like the opposite, is hewn into countless sepulchres, a region of death looking down upon what was once a vast and crowded hive of noisy life far below. So that on all sides, if we are right in supposing that all these excavations are, as they appear to be, sepulchres, the inhabitants of this unparalleled city beheld the habitations of their dead rising round like a curtain: in the Forum—in the streets—from the roof of the private dwelling —in the theatre—in highways and byways—up to the topmost crags of their rocky rampart—there were still sepulchres—nothing but sepulchres—even for miles out of the city !—the habitations of the dead must have outnumbered those of the living, even as they excelled them in costliness and beauty ! Yet doubts may well be entertained whether some of these rock-excavations were not really the *dwellings* of the inhabitants. The mountain of Dib-diba, part of the central chain of Edom, towards which there is an ascent among the left-hand range of rocks, is seen closing up the view in the background, and in this direction is the monument with Sinaitic characters, mentioned by Irby and Mangles, which I did not see, but which, if deciphered, may possibly throw light on many interesting questions connected with the former inhabitants of Idumea.

I lingered long in the shade of the rock commanding this noble view—my Arab guide, laying his gun on the rocks, had fallen into a deep sleep, and not a sound was heard in the melancholy area of the outspread city of tombs. At the rainy season alone a few of the wildest class of the Bedouins come down to profit by the brief verdure, soon leaving the place to the silence and obscurity that has hung over it for ages : a caravan from Gaza to Maan occasionally halts, and then passes ; or a stray traveller or two, with his noisy cortége, wakes up the echoes of its rocks, for a brief day or so ; but there is not a *single* dweller in either tent or tomb within the whole extent of the ancient capital of Edom—it is indeed utterly desolate !

I awoke Maganhem, and, descending more obliquely, came out

below the theatre, where the rocks from which it is hewn drop into the wady, and crossing the brook began a steep ascent to the right, towards what is called by Laborde the Corinthian Tomb, in which Komeh had established his cooking-place, as before stated. From hence is a very picturesque view of the principal tombs on the right-hand of the city, appearing in the previous view, and which I here give in greater detail, looking towards the theatre and ravine.

The two prominent tombs, if such they really are, may be considered as by far the most striking of those facing the area of the city itself. Their situation is very noble, commanding a fine view down upon the stream and principal buildings of the ancient city, from which they were equally conspicuous. The mass of crags out of which they are hewn is also most picturesque, rising in numerous jagged points and clefts; but the water filtering through them has much injured the architectural ornament, and nature is already beginning to assert her dominion, and to obliterate large portions by a wild growth of shrubs; besides which this open high bleak situation is more exposed to the action of the winds and rains. Neither of these monuments, costly and splendid as they must have been, can be compared with the Khŭsné for chasteness of design; but the very irregularity and strangeness of the architectural combinations have something that better harmonizes with the romantic situation and singular forms of the surrounding rocks than a more pure and regular design might, perhaps, have possessed. And here I should not omit to notice what every traveller has been struck with, and what, in fact, particularly in this range of tombs and on this side of the city, forms one of the most striking peculiarities of Petra—I mean the colouring of its rocks, which is wild, fantastic, and unique, as, indeed, is everything else about the place. The general tinting of the sandstone mountains environing the city is very fine; the broad rich red and grey tones such as the artist revels in; but, in addition, the surface of the rocks is veined after the manner of watered silk, with a most indescribable and startling variety of hues —white, saffron, orange, vermillion, pink, crimson, and violet, in endless shades and tints, in some places forming combinations really

beautiful ; in others, grotesquely strange, like sections of meat or of brawn, but so wildly thrown about the irregular surface of the crags, and so capriciously drawn in minute veins and stripes across the façades of the tombs, as infinitely to add to the marvellous and romantic singularity of this wonderful region.

Having thus surveyed the ravine of approach, the Khŭsné, Theatre, and the sides of the enclosing rocks, I now directed my steps towards the opposite range of cliffs, by descending to the bed of the stream which traverses the area of the ancient city, passing on the way foundations and heaps of stones everywhere scattered about, which indicate that each part of this area was built upon up to the very base of the cliffs. The only level space in the city, as before remarked, was along the border of the brook ; and, being precious, was defended against its abrasion by a strong stone embankment. Part was covered over, and one or more bridges were thrown across it, as also over another small ravine, which descends into it ; a paved way, of which portions exist, ran parallel with the stream, and was bordered by public buildings. The broken columns of a prostrate temple lay scattered on the rising ground a little above ; but the only remains now *standing* are grouped by the side of the river. Part of an arch, in a late and florid style of Roman architecture, is nearest at hand ; and, at some distance beyond, is a more considerable structure, of the same date, the precise character of which it is difficult to determine, though it may be conjectured to have been either a palace, or some important public building, rather than a temple. This the Arabs have named Kăsr Pharoon, or the palace of Pharaoh. These ruins are very unimportant, except as being the only fragments of the city now standing, and which, by their character and position, enable us to form an idea of the principal quarter, and its style of decoration.

Still higher, on the left-hand of the view, is the isolated crag which Laborde supposes to have been the Acropolis of the ancient city. I could not see any masonry on this rock, but it has been distinguished by others.

Having examined the principal objects of interest in the area of

the city and its surrounding rocks, I now, guided by Maganhem, directed my steps from the "Kasr Phar'on" to the mouth of the ravine leading up to "El Deir," which, as I have before remarked, and as the bird's-eye view will explain, is situated among the topmost crags of the mountain. So intricate is the route that, without the assistance of a map and guide, it would be almost impossible to find it; the earlier visitors to Petra, indeed, could not reach it; and yet there can be no doubt that it was one of the most frequented localities of the city. No one but an actual spectator can well imagine the singular romantic wildness of these narrow ravines, branching out from the open space among the piles of rocks which hem them in, and still more inconceivable is the ingenious manner in which staircases are cut to give access to the countless tombs or dwellings, sometimes ranged in rows, often secluded singly in rocky niches, and half overgrown with luxuriant vegetation. Of these flights of steps, that which conducts to El Deir is, certainly, one of the most remarkable works in the place; and nothing can well surpass the picturesque beauty of the ascent it affords to the upper region of the mountain—the ravine, all but closing in many places, would have been impracticable without its assistance: it follows its every sinuosity; at one moment we are hidden among romantic precipices, darkened with large yew trees, starting from the fissures; then, through openings in the cliffs, obtain peeps of the area of the city below, and its girdle of tombs. The way becomes more and more difficult, and passes along the edge of yawning chasms, the depths of which cannot be seen from above, while the intricate wilderness of rocky peaks, rising on every hand, affords a sublime spectacle. The carved way is of unusual dimensions, generally about six feet wide, sometimes cut on an inclined plane, and elsewhere fashioned into steps: it is now much injured by the action of the torrents, which occasionally pour down these ravines in a succession of waterfalls. Laborde estimates the length of this staircase at more than fifteen hundred feet, and I found it took me, at a moderate pace, above half-an-hour to ascend it. At its summit is a narrow plateau, partly artificial, at the head of two or more ravines, running

steeply up to it from below, only one of which—that by which we approached—appears to offer a practicable ascent; this little plateau is almost hemmed in by rocks, from one of which, "El Deir," the convent, as it is called, has been hollowed out with immense labour. It is a gigantic monument, producing from its vastness and the wildness of its situation, an impression almost of awe; but it is very defective in its style, for it is ponderous without grandeur, and elaborate without elegance. The interior resembles, in its simplicity, the other monuments already noticed, consisting merely of one large chamber, perfectly plain, with a niche at the extremity.

Immediately opposite to this colossal monolithic excavation, and on the other side of the level area, arises another crag, which was also wrought out into buildings, but in a different manner. The lowest part is excavated into tombs, or rather chambers; and a staircase led up to a level space above. Here are the bases of columns, apparently forming a temple or arcade; on one side of this, is another excavated chamber, with a niche, in a highly decorated style, probably the sanctuary. Above this rises the topmost summit of the crag, which seems to have been occupied by other edifices, commanding a wildly magnificent view over the sea of mountain peaks, across the Arabah to the frontiers of Palestine; and it is, indeed, most exciting, thus to stand on the highest peak of this city in the rocks, this lonely height, fit only, it should seem, for the abode of the eagle and gazelle, with its extraordinary monuments extending down to the deep chasm below, and overlooking Mount Hor, and a wilderness of other savage fastnesses, far beyond the frontier of ancient Edom, which they now everywhere surround, and once defended. There can be little doubt, that in the palmy days of the Idumean capital, this was a very important spot; the huge excavated monument on one side, the terraced crag on the other, with its ranges of buildings, its noble look-out, and the great staircase which led up to it, all point it out as a much frequented site: the structures around had probably some connexion with the religious ceremonies of the Edomites; and the imagination may picture the entire population

pouring up and down the long winding ascent to this singular crest of their romantic abode. But upon the nature of those ceremonies, or the manners and customs of the worshippers, although, no doubt, peculiar as the spot they inhabited, no light has yet been thrown; even the notices collected by scholars, relating to the different races who have successively peopled it, are scanty and confused; perhaps no place once so wealthy and important, has left so few records of the past, either on the page of history, or in monumental inscriptions, though perhaps the opinion of Robinson may ultimately prove correct, that "the scholar who should go thither, learned in the lore of Grecian and Egyptian arts and architecture, would be able still to reap a rich harvest of new facts illustrative of the taste, the antiquities, and the general history of this remarkable people."

The close of one of the most exciting days of my life was now hastening on: I descended from El-Deir, and reached the area of the city, as the evening sun was burnishing with a golden glow the entire range of cliffs and tombs, and directed my steps towards that in which I was to find a home for the night. It was indeed a very comfortable abode, the funeral chamber was large enough for the reception of a goodly company, and had evidently been used by former travellers; the roof was blackened with smoke, and we had apprehensions of vermin, from the dirt which each former occupant had helped to accumulate, but happily these fears proved unfounded. Komeh built up an excellent kitchen, near the ruinous door, and the adjacent splendid sepulchre, hewn for no less than royalty, served as a slaughter-house, in which a lamb, purchased from the Wady Musa Arabs, received its quietus from the rude yataghan of one of the Bedouins. Such festive preparations in these chambers of death might well seem a mockery of human pride. Little could the merchant prince who hollowed out for himself this costly mausoleum anticipate how, after that commerce which had so enriched him should have utterly passed away, a stranger from a far greater emporium, a wanderer from the capital of a land perhaps wholly unknown to him, or only vaguely heard of

as beyond the bounds of the whole earth, should thus appropriate to the commonest purposes of every-day life the chamber designed to preserve inviolate to the end of time his last mouldering remains! So it was, however; and the satisfaction of having fully attained an object long desired, with all appliances and means to restore the fatigue of sight-seeing and clambering, made this evening among the desolations of Petra pass away with a sort of wild gaiety. It was a strange scene that presented itself from the mouth of that old tomb.—the Arabs, now joined by the men of Wady Musa with their sheik, formed a circle around a huge fire which they had kindled,

for the night-air is chill in this high and bracing region; and never did ruddy flame illuminate a wilder-looking band; a collection of cut-throat visages apparently more alarming than these, although, happily, they might now be safely admired as picturesque, without being dreaded as formidable. The fire-light shot upward over the face of the vast ruinous mausoleum, casting over it an effect of melancholy grandeur, and the red hues died away on all sides

among the crags;—below lay the site of the city, with its vast bulwark of rocks, still as death, and dimly relieving from the sky, which glittered with innumerable stars, gloriously bright in the purity of the keen mountain air. Another fire was kindled inside the tomb, and kept up till a late hour, and I fell asleep in its grateful warmth, wondering, in a half-dozy, half-dreamy state, at the romantic strangeness of this funereal dormitory.

The following day I did little but revisit the prominent points more at leisure, and ascend a few of the rocky staircases among the cliffs, which everywhere display the same laborious and almost endless excavations, together with channels for water, reservoirs, and small level plots formerly cultivated; indeed there is probably not a single traveller who diverges at all from the usual beat, but may make fresh discoveries of this nature, and possibly very important ones. The larger monuments, such as the "Khŭsné" and the "Deir," are presumed to have been temples; but this is, after all, a conjecture, as their interior differs little from that of the smaller excavations; besides which, it is obvious that temples of the ordinary character existed in the city, their prostrate columns being visible in different places. Might they not have been buildings for public purposes? Another interesting question regards the comparative antiquity of the monuments; and whether there is any difference of style by which to discriminate the earlier monuments —those of the Edomites—from the later and more splendid ones of the Nabathæans, and those which bear evident marks of their Roman origin, or, at least, of Roman taste in their architecture. All that can be said, without a very exact classification of the different styles, is that the more rude and simple are the most ancient, and that the decorations of later monuments were copied from the prevailing architecture of the time in other countries, with which the inhabitants had intercourse; thus there are some which are more chaste and Grecian in character, some with a half Egyptian outline, others in a degraded Roman taste, which tells of the decline of art; but so far as I could observe, there is no *characteristic difference* in

their arrangement,—all seemed formed upon the same type, that adopted probably by the earliest settled inhabitants of the place, and merely improved upon by their more wealthy and civilized successors.

On the third morning I prepared to leave Petra. The sheik and his retainers, after the receipt of the gufr, and a long and noisy contest among themselves about its distribution, had taken themselves off, and the place had relapsed into its usual vacant, mournful, oppressive stillness, in which even the sound of one's own feet, echoing among the solitary rocks, is startling. While Komeh was busy in evacuating the great tomb, and packing our chattels for the road, I returned to take a last view of the Khŭsné, bathed in the rosy light of morning; so beautiful is it at that time, that the impression that I should never see it again was even painful: I tore myself away reluctantly, and reached the brook, just as the file of camels came slowly down the rugged slope from our funereal habitation, and mounting my dromedary, began the long ascent towards Mount Hor. Passing the lonely column, which is the only one now left standing of all the ruined temples of Petra, I reached at length the highest group of tombs, and paused there awhile to cast one parting glance over the area of the desolate city, which, thus beheld for the last time, leaves on the mind, as a previous tourist has finely observed, "an ineffaceable impression of mingled wonder and melancholy." *

Unlike Jerusalem, whose many revolutions fill the page of history with their burden of glory and of guilt, and whose final destiny is yet a subject of mysterious interest, with Petra are connected neither great events nor deathless names; her associations, like those of Tyre and Palmyra, are principally commercial, and like them too, never again is she destined to arise from ruin. But were the Book of Job, as some contend, a production of Edomite origin, depicting the civilization of that land, at a period when Jerusalem was not yet founded, what a halo would not this cast over desolate Idumea and

* Olin.

her perished capital, a monument of her past genius and greatness, nobler than the proudest of her rock-hewn temples, and lasting as the eternal hills themselves! And whatever may be the conflicting opinions of the commentators, assigning the poem, as they do, to different authors and periods, from Moses to Isaiah, the best critics, have at least admitted that there is about some portions of it, a breadth and simplicity of style, which breathes the very air of the infancy of the world, which seems like the unstudied and majestic utterance of the first inspired fathers of mankind. If we are thus to regard it, its incidental notices of the arts, wealth, and refinement of the people among whom it was composed, point to a state of civilization almost equalling at the same period that of the Egyptians themselves—in regard to their ideas of the nature and attributes of the Almighty, indeed far higher; and if this supposition be rejected, the fertility and populousness of Edom at the time when the Israelites sought to pass through its defiles are apparent from the very terms of their request: "Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the *fields*, or through the *vineyards*, neither will we drink of the water of the *wells:* we will go by the *king's highway*. And Edom came out against him, with *much people*, and with a *strong hand*."

How fallen is Edom now! Could the Jewish seers, who, animated by national hatred, and the sense of wrong, poured out the burden of denunciation upon Edom, awake and behold her utter ruin, they might almost weep at the fulfilment of their prophecies: "Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart. O thou that dwellest in the clifts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by shall be astonished, and shall hiss at the plagues thereof. No man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it."

The general strain of these and other prophecies, too strikingly accords with the total desolation of Edom; but a minuter application of particular passages in a well-known work on the subject, is

certainly not borne out by facts. The passage, "None shall pass through it for ever," alluded, doubtless, to the total breaking up of the great commercial routes, as well as its general abandonment and ruin, and not, as is fancifully supposed, in the work in question, to the utter exclusion even of a single passenger or traveller; inasmuch as caravans of Arabs are, and probably ever have been, in the habit of going to and fro in different directions; and numerous travellers also have of late years passed unharmed through the length and breadth of the land.

So near Jerusalem, it being a journey of but about five days from Petra, I was strongly tempted to return, or to have taken the route to Gaza, if possible, by the spot supposed by Mr. Rowlands to have been the veritable Kadesh-Barnea, and thence to have regained Egypt; but these deviations from my original plan would have involved me in much eventual difficulty, and I was reluctantly compelled to turn my face towards Akaba. Everywhere along the road, we perceived traces of former edifices connected with Petra, even to the very base of the mountain-pass by which we descended into the desert plain; where, after a long and very toilsome day's journey, we at length encamped at sunset, with the stern ridges of Mount Seir, rising like a dark wall around our tent.

On my way to Petra I had been so much absorbed in the anticipation of its wonders, as to pay but little attention to the formation of Wady el Arabah, with a view to determine the point in its bed at which the waters divide; some, as before said, to flow southward into the Gulf of Akaba, and others northward into the Dead Sea. This, in fact, is a question of little importance to any but the geographer, and would prove to the general reader especially dry; yet on the spot it was not without some degree of interest. I shall, however, be very brief in my remarks on the subject. On reaching the mouth of Wady A'bchēbe, through which descends the road from Petra, we came upon a broad valley or plain, cut up by several torrents pouring down from the mountains of Edom, all of which, as we subsequently ascertained, took a *northerly* direction, falling ultimately into the Dead Sea. This

direction of the streams continues till we reach the high gravelly bed formed by one of them coming out of a valley in the eastern mountains, called by Laborde, Wady Houer, which is the "point culminant" on the *eastern* side of the Arabah, and *hence* the waters decline both north and south. It is well known that the uneven bed of the Arabah is much higher on the east than on the west. But what gives to the whole region its peculiarity, is an irregular range of sand-hills, which, running at this point up to the eastern mountains, takes thence a sloping direction south-west, towards the mouth of Wady Tulh, on the opposite, or western side of the Arabah, (see Map,) thus dividing its bed into two distinct slopes, which afford a passage for the different watercourses that respectively pour down upon them from the mountains above. Thus all the waters from the eastern mountains south of Wady Houer, the point culminant on this side, flow southward into the Gulf of Akabah, being forced to this direction by the range of hills before spoken of, while the point of division on the opposite or western side is at or near Wady Tulh, at their termination, some distance further south. From this wady we could clearly perceive that the Arabah sloped both north and south—southward towards the Gulf of Akaba, draining Jebel Beyaneh; and northwards towards the Dead Sea, draining the high western Desert. This double water-shed is, in fact, the great peculiarity of the district. On my way down I paid as much attention to this point as could be given without making an actual survey of the eastern side of the Arabah; and my own observations were confirmed by the Alawin Arabs who were with me, and whom I questioned as I could upon the subject. I did not indeed cross over to the western side of the valley, but have little or no doubt as to the correctness of M. Bertou's account of this matter. In saying this, I am aware that its accuracy has been impugned by a distinguished and learned traveller, whose general correctness of observation is unquestionable, on his own route of travel; but as he did not *personally* examine the district in question, and his objections to M. Bertou's statements, the tenor of which he has obviously misunderstood, rest mainly upon

theoretical views, I trust I am but performing an act of justice to M. B., in thus attesting the truth of his observations on this particular point. It is, however, much to be desired, as observed by Sir G. Wilkinson, that an accurate trigonometrical survey of the peninsula should be executed.

We encamped this evening at the mouth of Wady Ghurundel. Burckhardt and Laborde give the direction of this valley through the eastern mountains as north-north-west, which has very naturally led others to suppose that its waters, on issuing into the Arabah, continue on the same line towards the Dead Sea; but this, as I have before said, is prevented by the dividing range of hills before alluded to, and the torrent accordingly bends round, and its waters, taking the general slope of the Arabah southward, fall into the Gulf of Akaba, so at least it appeared to me, and so the Arabs repeatedly affirmed.

The ruins apparently of a small town, stand on the top of a cliff at the southern entrance of Wady Ghurundel; and at a short distance above is a little oasis of grass and reeds, with a solitary palm-tree, picturesquely overhanging it, and a few small pools of water.

Next day was one of disasters. Our progress down the Arabah was very toilsome; Komeh and myself got astray among vast heaps of loose drifting sand: towards evening we reached the edge of the Marsh El Ghudyan—the clouds began to gather over the eastern mountains, and to threaten a storm—welcome indeed to the Bedouin shepherd, as bringing in its train the long-desired pasturage for his flocks; but not altogether so agreeable to the traveller, who carries his house, clothes, and bedding on a camel's back, exposed to be drenched through and through, as well as himself, a prospect full of aguish and rheumatic apprehensions. Here our pieces of oil-cloth proved highly serviceable; the tents and mattress were hastily covered over; but, alas! there were no cords to keep the covering steady; and, descending myself, I planted my Arab guide on the top, with directions to keep his legs astride, and hold down the corners as well as he could, as a little rain, I was well

assured, would do no harm to his dirty skin; meanwhile I covered myself with a cloak, and pushed on. The storm now came down in earnest, the thunder rolled and echoed through the mountains, the wind was tremendous, and the rain would have soaked through all our apparatus in a moment, and not left me a dry shirt, but for the oil-skin aforesaid, a happy forethought of kind Mrs. Lieder's at Cairo. We were fortunate in being on the wet edge of the marsh; for, looking back, we could see the loose shifting hills through which we had been toiling lashed up by the whirlwind into dense tremendous clouds of sand, obscuring all prospect, and which, relieved on the dark stormy sky, formed a sublime spectacle: regarded with not the less gratification that we had happily escaped its blinding fury. The camels were struggling on slowly against the blast, swaying to and fro, with averted noses, when one of them uttered a portentous groan, and darted off at a hard trot at right-angles from the line of our march, with the two panniers containing all our stores and utensils banging furiously to and fro against his flanks. There was a general yell, and then a general chase; minor evils of wind and rain were all forgotten:—were a careful housewife to see her store-closet and china-cupboard suddenly taking to themselves legs and dancing a sailor's hornpipe, she could not feel as we did; for in the Desert there is no redemption for broken crockery or spoiled provisions. Happily the startled beast got entangled in the bushes ere he had wrought such a consummation of our distress. At length we halted under the lee of a thorny acacia: the wind was so furious as to tear up the pegs and blow down the tent, after it had with difficulty been pitched; nor did I suppose that it either could have been raised again, or if raised, kept upright for many moments; but these were the occasions which "try men's souls," and brought out all Komeh's vigour and energy—he put us all into requisition; one was used as a dead-weight upon the windward rope, while the pegs were being driven: a long cord, passed round the top of the tent, was tied firm to the old acacia, and finally we defied the blast. But even this was not all: the rain still poured down in torrents; I built up my mattress, at the suggestion of an old ori-

ental traveller, on the camp-stools, covered it with a heavy carpet, and doggedly waited till the wet should turn the tent into a shower-bath. The Arabs were in miserable case, taking the full brunt of it outside, and vainly striving to kindle a fire. I made them all creep into the tent, waving for once my fears of what they might bring in with them; Komeh distributed tobacco; and in this philosophic mood, and in a cloud of smoke, we awaited our threatened drenching. The rain at length passed off; the night turned out magnificently clear; the stars came out in all their splendour; and a good supper by a blazing fire outside the tent made us forget all previous mishaps, or remember them only to heighten by contrast the present pleasure. But I pity the traveller through the Desert in the rainy season.

Brilliant was the morning after the storm: the Desert was cooled, the far distant hills, even to their minutest peaks, stood glittering out in the purified ether, and the air was elastic and inspiring, enough to "create a soul under the ribs of death." We were almost within sight of Akaba, and I could congratulate myself on the successful accomplishment of my journey to and from Petra. About noon we reached the bright blue sea and the palm-groves, and our

old friends began to flock round us again. A small vessel from Suez had arrived, during our absence, with corn from Egypt, for the supply of the expected pilgrims, occasioning some little bustle in this sleepy place. It was a small djerm, high pitched at the stern, probably some such craft as the ships of Jehoshaphat, which went cruising hence to Ophir, and were broken among the rocks. At the present day, large vessels could not come up to Akaba, but must lay out quite at a distance from the shore.

This was a bustling and a joyful day both to myself and Komeh, for we were now turning our faces towards Cairo. We had seen Petra, and were glad to escape from the toils and privations of the Desert; fresh provisions were obtained, and everything organized for our ten days' march home. One old fellow, that had gone with us to Petra, I determined to leave behind: he was decrepit, with a bad cough, and his arm in a sling from some accident, his gait was tottering and slow, and he seemed fitter for an hospital than for a march to Cairo. Moreover, I had a spite against him, for he was at the bottom of every attempt to force me to halt ere a fair day's journey had been performed; and I thought we should have either to stop on the road to nurse him, if he broke down, or leave him to die, which latter alternative seemed to be regarded by the young sheik as highly probable, and to be anticipated in a spirit of entire resignation, or rather indifference—the vultures would soon dispose of him, and there was sand enough for his shroud and grave. But it was in vain I resolved that he should not come with us: he was equally dogged in the contrary resolution; for one of the camels was his, and the risk of dying in the Desert was nothing to losing his share of the piastres. Akmed, my guide, and the owner of the camel I had ridden upon to Petra, now came to take leave, intending to remain at Akaba. This I regretted; for, though the wildness of his look had led me to expect a troublesome customer in him, I had found him quite the reverse. A man of more magnificent stature and muscular proportions I never beheld, nor one more dignified by the noble air and freedom of spirit which the wilderness bestows; and further acquaintance showed in this splendid frame was lodged a heart tender and kind as a woman's;

and when I had known him for but a few days, I would have confided my life to him. He was, besides, romance-teller and singer to the whole party, who seemed to love him. His dwelling was under a rough tent, woven of camel-hair, slung between two of the palm-trees. He came on this occasion with his little daughter in his arms. This child I had before remarked as the prettiest in Akaba; and I promised to send her a handkerchief from Cairo with the return camels, a promise which, with Komeh's assistance, was punctually performed; besides which, I deemed his fidelity and good offices deserving of a liberal backshish. Poor fellow! he was overjoyed, and followed me far out of the place, kissing my hand, and taking leave with every appearance of emotion.

We retraced our route from Akaba around the head of the gulf, and then began to ascend the western range of mountains which border the Wady el Arabah, in order to reach the level Desert above, following the broad pilgrim route formed by a great number of parallel camel-tracks. The pass is long and winding, but with no scenery of the slightest interest; and we encamped at night among the rocks, about half-way up to the crest.

The latter part of the ascent we accomplished next morning: it is steep and toilsome, but opens fine retrospective peeps at the gulf below. The road is in some places cut away or carefully built up, as the case requires; and there are Arabic inscriptions recording the authors of these works. The road itself was made (or, I should rather say, made easy) in A.D. 868—884,* by Sultan Ibn Tooloon, the same whose mosque in Cairo, hereafter described, contains one of the earliest specimens of the pointed arch. On emerging from this long and tedious ascent, the high western Desert expands in endless prospect,—a vast plain of fine gravel, covered with small pebbles, varied by a long perspective of camels' bones, bleached perfectly white, pointing out the track of the pilgrims across its boundless level, and the mirage spreading out a shifting succession of blue lakes, with the tops of distant hills appearing like islands among the

* Makrizi, cited by Burckhardt. See Robinson.

phantom waters. This great plateau is raised some fifteen hundred feet or more above the level of the Red Sea; and it extends, with little variety or change of level, a distance of an hundred miles, to its western extremity, at Djebel Er Rahah, from which the ground sinks down to Suez. The air was particularly bracing and inspiriting on the lofty level, and we set our faces towards Cairo with a feeling of exhilaration quite indescribable. The fresh breeze tempered the rays of the sun, and we walked some miles over the firm smooth gravel without fatigue, remounting during the great heat of noon, and then taking another long walk before sunset. This vast plain is intersected with limestone hills and shallow watercourses, running to the north-west, dotted with tufts of coarse grass and shrubs, and affords, after the rains, considerable pasturage to the Bedouins, who, in the arid season, as, doubtless, of yore did the Israelites, conduct their flocks to stations in the mountains. Indeed this vegetation, at some little distance after, produced an appearance of cultivation which, though illusory, was pleasing.

Afar off to the north-west, like a landmark in the Desert, is the conspicuous peak of Djebel Araif-en-Nakah, with inferior ridges receding from it. We could also make out the summits of the Tih, and other mountains far to the southward. All day the air was keen, and at night it became colder than I had before experienced in the peninsula; fortunately, we discovered the trunk of an old acacia in the wady where we halted for the night, and made a glorious bonfire.

As we sat by the burning logs, I gathered that Muhammed, though quite a youth, was married, and lord of an extensive tent, with "everything handsome about him," in the paternal settlement among the mountains east of the Arabah. His father, Sheik Hussein, is notoriously a man of great wealth for a Bedouin. They migrate from well to well, as pasturage for their numerous flocks and horses requires; and I ascertained that they had their wandering harpers, or chanters of romances, describing their wars and loves. One of these I fell in with the following day, and should have bespoke a roundelay for myself, with a view to appreciate the style, and get at some

inkling of its meaning, but for the tumult in which, it will be presently seen, I managed to get involved. The Bedouin sheiks of wealth have also, like Abraham, servants, or slaves, smuggled or purchased from Egypt. Muhammed's camel was always led by an Abyssinian, a man of singularly intelligent countenance, and who seemed to be much consulted. Nor was this possession of slaves the only instance of conformity to patriarchal manners and customs, for it is found in many and even in minute particulars. The hard dealing of Laban, who made Jacob serve his seven years for a wife, and the craft and subtlety of the patriarch himself, are curiously paralleled among them at the present day. They are, however, as has been often noticed, somewhat indifferent to religion ; though nominally Mahommedan, they have no ceremonial observances—no settled worship—and it is very rarely they are seen to pray. Only one instance of the kind fell under my own observation during our stay in the Desert ; and the conduct of this individual, as is sometimes the case at home, lent no lustre to his profession of exclusive piety.

The night being very cold I had retired early to rest, when Komeh came in to say, that the Governor of Akaba had just arrived at the camp ; he was pushing forward across the waste, in advance of the caravan, to arrange everything in order for its reception, when our tent and blazing fire caught his eye ; and being chilled to the bone by the cold and mist, he gladly turned aside at a sight so welcome. It became a question of etiquette whether I ought not to get up and receive him; but, as Stephens says of this particular functionary, there are some governors with whom one may venture to take a liberty. I was undressed, and so deliciously warm and comfortable in bed, with a volume of Shakespeare in hand, and a glass of punch by my bedside, that I was loath to turn out ; and, besides, Komeh declared that to do so was quite unnecessary. I desired him to make my apologies, and entertain him well. Coffee was made, our stores produced ; and when he had fairly warmed and filled, with many expressions of civility, he mounted his dromedary and rode off again through the darkness. He gave us to understand that the

caravan was just behind, and that we should meet it early on the following day.

I awoke next morning quite chilled ; and on stepping outside the tent found everything enveloped in a white mist, as though we were in the Highlands of Scotland, the ground thoroughly wet, and everything within damp and clammy. Komeh and the Arabs presented a rueful appearance ; but coffee, our never-failing consolation, was soon made : and now, in expectation of meeting the Haj, every one was anxious to set himself off to the best advantage, even the most ragged of the escort giving to their tattered tunics and well worn bernous, a knowing arrangement ; I put on my last clean shirt with a new tarboosh and red sash ; and Muhammed produced on this grand occasion a new robe of crimson silk, assumed his huge yellow boots, (in general his feet were naked,) and looked every inch a sheik's son : for the passage of the caravan, coming, like Christmas, but once a year, is regarded as a great event. We proceeded through the rolling mists, missing now and then the track ; but as the sun rose, his beams, shooting through the vapour, first gilding it into brilliant beauty, and then gradually dissipating it, opened to us at length

" The wide expanse of burning sand and sky."

All was now eager anticipation, every eye fixed on the far horizon ; but upon one of our Arab's climbing to the top of a hill by the wayside, he declared, after long straining of his optics, that there was as yet no sign of the advance of the caravan. So we went on till noon ; when, on ascending a ridge of sand-hills which had hitherto cut off the distant view, we saw emerging suddenly from behind the gay headdress of the Bedouin escort, and in a moment a dozen of them, mounted on fleet dromedaries, dashed up at a rapid trot, presenting as they rose against the sky one of the finest groups I beheld in Arabia. Their white dromedaries, most gallantly caparisoned with long gay tassels, sweeping the ground and streaming in the wind, were of great beauty as well as swiftness, and seemed in their quick movement to fly across the light sand like a noiseless cloud. Their riders, gaily dressed in long silk tunics, hanging loosely

about their sinewy frames, and splendid bernous adorned with golden fringes, were raised high on their saddle-bags, their spears glittering and flashing in the sun: as they caught sight of us, with eager laughing eyes, they hurried down to greet the young Muhammed, and uttered a few words which induced him instantly to leave the line and rapidly press forward. Following more slowly; and reaching the top of the sand-hill, we caught our first glimpse of the caravan, and were just in time to witness the meeting with his father and kindred in the valley below. It was indeed most beautiful, that first view of the advancing pilgrims; but still more interesting was the family meeting, rich in reminiscences of patriarchal times and manners. A green wady, sprinkled with shrubs and a few groups of wild acacias, was beneath us; beyond lay the level Desert, with the long winding procession stretching far away to the utmost verge of the horizon. A gay group of Bedouin horsemen, turning off the main track, pushed through the shrubs, to halt under a conspicuous cluster, while Muhammed, dashing on, met them halfway across the wady; but before he could arrive, his younger brother, clad in all the finery of Cairo, dismounted, and breaking from the line, in a moment, was in Muhammed's arms, and dragging him, with childish glee, to the encampment, where his father, Sheik Hussein, with his all splendidly-dressed cortége had already arrived. For a few moments all was affection—from his father's embrace, Muhammed passed round to salute his numerous retainers; and then sat down in the midst of them. Carpets were spread, pipes were already brought forth, a fire was kindled for coffee, and all surrounded Muhammed to learn the details of his journey with the Inglis, at the same time glancing towards myself and Komeh, who were more slowly advancing towards the place of meeting. I was delighted with this beautiful picture of Bedouin life; but however loving they might be among themselves, towards the Frank traveller, I felt sure, they had but one feeling,—that of intense desire for his piastres; and remembering the antecedents of this grasping Sheik Hussein, and the infamous extortions he had from time to time practised upon the defenceless traveller, I determined to meet him with the reserve and

coldness he merited, and by no means to descend and take coffee and a pipe with him, as I should have done with a man of more generous mould, however inferior in degree. As I stopped my dromedary he stepped forward, the very picture of a politic Arab sheik, cold, grave, and wily in countenance ; he saluted me with measured mien and manner, and beckoned an invitation with much grace and dignity. Returning his courtesies, I desired Komeh to explain that I was in haste, and anxious not to lose the passing caravan, and declined dismounting: he bowed, and, as Komeh afterwards told me, inquired of him how Muhammed had conducted himself towards me on the journey—the faithful fellow bluffly enumerated his misdeeds, and he received a paternal lecture as soon as I departed. The sweeter subject of the piastres was deferred to a private occasion. One touch of Bedouin feeling I was much struck with : the old man charged his son to hasten back to his native deserts, and not to linger even for a single day in Cairo ; this he said with genuine warmth of feeling, which strangely contrasted with the artificial courtesy adopted towards myself. His paternal solicitude, however, might possibly have been heightened by the consideration, that Muhammed had yet to receive one half of the payment due for the camels, and it could not be too soon deposited in the proper hands.

Leaving the young sheik to overtake us, we now proceeded to meet the body of the caravan, which was coming on at a steady pace, the attendant Bedouins generally hovering on its flanks, but sometimes much in advance. First came a body of stragglers, who seemed as if they had been suddenly wafted from the suburbs of Cairo without note or preparation ; a large proportion of them were tattered ragamuffins of the lowest aspect, the very offscouring of the capital, and, to all appearance, utterly unfurnished for the journey—some plodding on foot, others mounted on donkeys ; women even bearing their children on their shoulders, the asses which carried them having perished,—a painfully grotesque assemblage, for it was past all question, that of these miserable wretches, too many must fall victims to fatigue and privation during their lengthened course. In their total want of preparation, their ignorance of

the way and blind reliance on the providence of Allah, they strongly reminded me of the description of those fanatic hordes who went forth on the first crusade, and who perished by thousands long ere they reached the borders of Palestine. They inquired for Akaba, as those were accustomed to ask for Jerusalem, supposing it always just at hand; and were astounded when we told them they had nearly three days' journey to accomplish. Strongly contrasted with this deplorable rabble came spurring forward detached groups of completely appointed Caireen gentlemen, well mounted, well dressed, all their garments being fresh and glossy, armed to the teeth, and followed at a distance by well-laden camels, bearing comfortable tents and abundant stores; some of them, proud of their own gallant appearance and the spirit of their horses, pranced and curvetted, and performed different feats of horsemanship within sight of the hodags which bore their lady-loves, throwing the dust without much ceremony into the eyes of the poorer wayfarers. Of these well-armed men there was in all a considerable number, and they alone might have made head against a numerous body of assailants, at least, while as yet fatigue and want of water had not reduced the strength and condition of the horse and the spirit of his rider, as was the case with the gallant crusaders in the olden time. Relying on the fleetness of their horses, for enabling them to overtake the main body, several parties were halting on sandy knolls at some distance, each planting a lance in the sand as a rallying post, smoking and sipping coffee, and making a noontide repast. The expense formerly incurred by some of the richer class of pilgrims seems almost incredible: Burckhardt tells us that "in 1816, several grandees of Cairo joined the Haj, one of whom had one hundred and ten camels for the transport of his baggage and retinue, and eight tents; his travelling expenses in going and coming must have amounted to ten thousand pounds." But such zeal and such wealth are getting rarer and rarer every year of fast-waning Islam.

The main body of the caravan advanced steadily in a compact mass, five camels in depth. In the front was the cannon, used for

announcing the time of halting and starting again, on a sort of sledge, drawn by three camels, harnessed in a peculiar manner, and each with a soldier on his back. Next, in the centre, succeeded a long line of camels, bearing palanquins, or hodags, occupied by women, a sort of tent either built up on the back of a single animal, or slung, like a sedan-chair, between two of them, and varying in the splendour of its materials, and gaudiness of its decorations, with the rank of its fair occupant; some being quite radiant with crimson or green silk, embroidered in gold, surmounted with glittering crescents, and having small windows, latticed without and lined within with looking-glass: most of these, on account of the heat, were thrown open, and admitted occasional peeps at the languid sleepy eyes within. To some of the tenants of these hodags Burckhardt gives, indeed, but an equivocal character. "I saw with them," he says, "a party of public women and dancing-girls, whose tents and equipage were among the most splendid in the caravan." The camels bearing these aristocratic and, as it might be, other ladies, were also fantastically decorated, and were led by well-dressed grooms. In one of the most sumptuous carriages to be found in the group reclined the Emir-el-Haj, who bears rule over the caravan. The same form of conveyance, but in ruder style, was adopted by many of the poorer class of Arab merchants, except that, as in Cairo, the women, dressed in blue wrappers, were, with their children, exposed to view, while the husband himself was the conductor of his migratory household. Camels in a double line, well laden with stores, merchandise, and water-skins, paced steadily along on either side of the middle file, accompanied by their attendant drivers.

A burst of tom-toms, a rude sort of Arab drum, and a denser crowd, now indicated the approach of the central and most important part of the procession, viz., the Mahmal, or camel selected to carry, under a costly canopy, the copy of the Koran sent to Mecca. We came to a halt, to observe it with more attention while passing; and if this singular spectacle arrested our notice, the pilgrims, on their part, appeared no less surprised at the apparition of a solitary traveller in a Frank dress, coming across the Desert in

the opposite direction. Many were the questions put to Komeh, who, to my renewed surprise, seemed here as well as everywhere else, to know almost everybody; and many were the salutations addressed to myself,—though all, it was evident, did not regard me with quite so favourable an eye, their welcome varying probably according to the laxity or rigour of their Mussulman fanaticism. In this mixed host, as in the Crusades of old, many and various were the shades of character and motive impelling to the performance of a pilgrimage; and there would have been little difficulty in grouping the host according to the indications afforded by their respective appearance. The comfortable, nay, luxurious style of many showed forth rather the man of rank or wealthy merchant, with whom the formal sense of the fulfilment of a pious duty, which adds further consideration to that of wealth, or the dissipation of ennui, or an eye to profitable traffic, were motives largely qualifying the religious fanaticism, which was strongly stamped on the scowling visages of many of the more poorly provided. Some of these, from their green turbans, had evidently gone on the pilgrimage before, and their general mien bore out the well-known Eastern saying, which proportions to the number of these pious journeys he has performed, the mingled amount of rascality and fanaticism acquired by the pilgrim. Sallow-faced dervishes abounded: these, says Burckhardt, "of every sect and order in the Turkish empire, are found among the pilgrims; many of them *madmen*, or at least assuming the appearance of insanity, which causes them to be much respected by the hadjys, and fills their pockets with money. The behaviour of some of them is so violent, and at the same time so cunning, that even the least charitably disposed hadjys gave willingly something to escape from them."

The Mahmal, (seen in the centre of our view,) borne on the back of a fine camel, selected for the purpose, and exempted for the rest of its life from ordinary labour, consists of a square wooden frame, terminating in a pyramidal form, covered with dark brocade, and highly ornamented with gilt fringes and tassals. Mr. Lane states that in every cover he has seen, was worked a view of the Temple of

Mecca, and over it the Sultan's cypher; but these particulars escaped my notice. According to the same excellent authority, from whom I borrow some further details relating to the pilgrimage, it contains nothing, besides two mus-hafs, or copies of the Koran, one on a scroll, and the other in the usual form of a little book, and each enclosed in a case of gilt silver, attached externally at the top. It is related that the Sultan En-Zahir Beybars, King of Egypt, was the first who sent a Mahmal with the caravan of pilgrims to Mecca, in the year of the Flight, 670, (A.D. 1272,) or 675; but this custom, it is generally said, has its origin a few years before his accession to the throne. Sheger-ed-Durr (commonly called Shegeret-ed-Durr,) a beautiful Turkish slave, who became the favourite wife of the Sultan Es-Saleh Negen-ed-Deen, and on the death of his son (with whom terminated the dynasty of the house of Eiyoob) caused herself to be acknowledged as queen of Egypt, performed the pilgrimage in a magnificent "hodag," or covered litter, borne by a camel; and for several successive years her empty hodag was sent with the caravan, merely for the sake of state. Hence succeeding princes of Egypt sent, with each year's caravan of pilgrims, a kind of hodag, (which received the name of "Mahamal," or "Mahamil,") as an emblem of royalty; and the kings of other countries followed their example. The Wahhabees prohibited the Mahmal, as an object of vain pomp: it afforded them one reason for intercepting the caravan."

Immediately behind the Mahmal followed another camel, bearing a square wooden seat, fenced with boards, in which was seated an old hairy Santon, his head uncovered, and perfectly naked to the waist, swaying to and fro, broiling and blackening in the fierce sunbeams. This singular being is called the "Sheik of the Camel," and receives from government two camels and his provisions: he is probably the same individual described by Mr. Lane, as having for several years accompanied the caravan to and from Mecca. This old man, in whom I supposed the whole animus of Mussulman intolerance to be concentrated, saluted us very courteously. In addition to this original, the Mahmal was a few years ago followed by another, and

still more singular one: an old woman, with head uncovered, and only wearing a shirt. She was called "Umm-el-Kutat," or the mother of the cats, having always five or six cats sitting about her on her camel.

The journey from Cairo to Mecca is long and arduous, and occupies thirty-seven days,* and the route is, for the most part, desert. "The route of the Egyptian caravan is far more dangerous and fatiguing than that of the Syrian; the road along the shore of the Red Sea leading through the territories of wild and warlike tribes of Bedouins, who frequently endeavour to cut off a part of the caravan by open force." The caravan travels slowly but steadily; the time for halting and departing being marked by the sound of the cannon. Komeh, who was himself a Hadji, had contrived, in a rough way, to furnish me with an account of the details and privations of his pilgrimage, some of which were painful enough: they agreed exactly with Mr. Lane's account. "It is not merely by the visit to Mecca, and the performance of the ceremonies of compassing the Kaabeh seven times, and kissing the 'black stone' in each round, and other rites in the Holy City, that the Muslim acquires the title of 'El-hagg,' (or the pilgrim): the final object of the pilgrimage is Mount Arafât, six hours journey from Mecca. It is necessary that the pilgrim be present on the occasion of a Khutbeh, which is recited on Mount Arafât, in the afternoon of the 9th of the month of Zu-l-Heggeh. In the ensuing evening, after sunset, the pilgrims commence their return to Mecca." This was described to me as a most exciting and splendid scene. Burckhardt gives an interesting account of it in his journey to Mecca and Medina. "Halting the following day in the valley of Mina (or, as it is more commonly called, Muna,) they complete the ceremonies of the pilgrimage by a sacrifice, part of the flesh of which they eat, and part give to the poor." "This is called El-fida, (the ransom,) as it is performed in commemoration of the ransom of Is'mael (or Ishmael) when he was about to be offered by his father Abraham; for it is

* Lane.

the general opinion of the Muslims that it was this son, and not Isaac, who was to have been sacrificed.

"Generally towards the end of Safar (the second month) the return caravan reaches Cairo, sending in advance an officer, accompanied by two Arabs, on fleet dromedaries, to announce its speedy arrival, and to carry packets of letters to the relatives of pilgrims, for which he is handsomely rewarded. Some then advance with provisions and even music to meet their jaded friends. It is very affecting to see, at the approach of the caravan, the numerous parties who go out with drums and pipes, to welcome and escort to the city their friends arrived from the holy places; and how many who went forth in hope, return with lamentation instead of music and rejoicing! for the arduous journey through the Desert is fatal to a great number of pilgrims who cannot afford themselves necessary conveniences. Many of the women who go forth to meet their husbands or sons, receive the melancholy tidings of their having fallen victims to privation and fatigue. The piercing shrieks with which they rend the air as they retrace their steps to the city are often heard predominant over the noise of the drum and the shrill notes of the hautboy which proclaim the joy of others."

We had now seen the best of the apparently interminable procession, for other bodies continued to advance at a distance, after the main track, having fallen behind for want of proper and ready organization, which may well account for the manner in which the clouds of Saracens hovered of old about the Crusaders, surrounding and cutting off separate detachments from the main body, as the hostile Bedouins of the great Desert are also at times accustomed to do; and woe be to the luckless wretches, who fall victims to these remorseless enemies of civilized man, with whom successful robbery is an honourable trade of such ancient standing. All was evidently hurry and alarm in their minor detachments.

Reaching now a bold hillock of sand, occupied by a party of well-dressed Turks who politely invited me to take coffee with them, I ascended it to take a farewell view of the caravan. I had been delighted with every detail of the singular procession, and would not

have missed seeing it on any account. It is a truly oriental spectacle, the most characteristic that exists, transporting the beholder back to the very earliest historic times, and even into the clouds of tradition and fable that precede it; for there can be no doubt that this mode of travel was practised from a period long lost in obscurity, that it would naturally be resorted to in these regions in the very infancy of the world, and that the organization of these migratory hosts, must besides ever have been nearly the same. My thoughts went back to the time of Joseph and the Patriarchs, to the days of wealthy Tyre and Petra, and the later magnificence of Palmyra, all connected with this primitive unchanged mode of travel across the vast interior of Asia, all indebted for their splendour to the patient camel, the ship of the Desert, so wonderfully adapted by an omniscient Providence for ministering to the wants of the Eastern world, both in its earliest and advanced stages, equally needful to the migratory camp of Bedouin wanderers, and for the requirements of the luxurious trading cities of Egypt and Syria, which have for ages dispensed the riches of the East throughout the Western world. Those cities and their commerce have passed away, but the same mode of travel still subsists, and ever must throughout those extensive regions of the world, to which it is exclusively suitable. The long procession, with its face set towards distant Mecca, defiled slowly away, the most advanced portion disappearing over the sandy swell, where we had first encountered it. I could not but follow it in imagination to its destined bourne, through the many perils which hovered about its painful track,—the Bedouins of the Great Desert, the fearful Simoom, the terrible destitution of water, and often of necessary food, under which many, at least of the more poorly provided and infirm, must sink: I thought, too, of the fate which, even now, might be hovering over the gayest and best furnished of these splendid pavilions, whose delicate tenants, unequal to the struggle with protracted fatigue, must then be committed to their last homes in the wilderness, to form a fellowship in the grave with the broken-down straggler, whom the departing host has heartlessly left behind to perish, to dig with his expiring

strength his own shallow grave in the sand, and await the passing of the angel of death.

The caravan had passed, and the Desert seemed more solitary than before. We encamped at evening on one of the intermediate halting-places of the Haj, in Wady el Arish, an important wady, which, draining all this part of the Desert, falls into the sea near the town of the same name, on the frontier of Egypt and Palestine. It is here broad and shallow, full of shrubs, among which a numerous, but, as far as we were concerned, quite inoffensive, party of Bedouins were encamped. An old ruinous burying-place is near, enclosing a few tombs, some of which are recent and handsomely decorated; the graves, probably, of rich pilgrims, who have died on their way.

Rolling mists, next morning, as before, through which we proceeded, passing another burial-place at the foot of a sandy ridge, when the cloudy veil suddenly drew aside, and presented to us, in startling proximity, the castle of Nŭkl, its white walls glittering in the sun. This station, built on a rising ground bordered by a few Bedouin huts, and in the midst of a wilderness of open sand, is half-way between the similar one of Ajrood, near Suez, and that of Akaba. The construction of all is similar: a square court, surrounded by ranges of buildings, a strong wall and towers, with a deep gateway, much like one of our own Gothic fortresses. I had not intended to make any halt here, except for the purpose of watering the camels and obtaining a supply. On reaching the gateway, I found a considerable number of Arabs, together with the governor of the castle and his subordinates, sitting within its deep cool shadow; and an old Bedouin was playing on a rude sort of harp, accompanying its twang with an Arab romance, of which I had some curiosity to learn the burden. But a far different music awaited me. I sat down a few moments in the entry to rest myself and to salute them, and then proceeded below to the well, to expedite the business of watering the camels. This well is a noble work, deep, of fine masonry, with a channel round the top for the animals to drink from; and there are, besides, large tanks for rain-water a little above, in good order,

every provision being made at this midway station for securing to the caravan a supply of this first necessary of desert life.

The men employed in drawing the water proved very mercenary and troublesome; and I was urging them forward, when my attention was arrested by a loud clamour at the castle door, where Komeh was haranguing away, in the midst of a multitude composed of our own Arabs and those of the tribe, with the officials of the castle, and a number of hangers-on from the village below. I did not use much ceremony in pushing my way through the crowd; and, planting myself before the governor, got Komeh to explain to me as well as he could the cause of the tumult, which arose, I found, out of a difficulty I had not in the least anticipated when at Akaba. I found that, in fact, my sheik of the Alawin was infringing on the privilege claimed by each of the Bedouin tribes—that of carrying travellers across their respective districts. We were here on that of the Tiyâhah tribe; and, as our ill-luck, or perhaps the previous contrivance of some straggling spy had brought about, we found the sheik of their tribe sitting in the doorway, with some of his retainers, ready to intercept us. Whether, in fact, Muhammed was justified, by Bedouin law, in bringing me at all across this territory, or was merely subject to a tribute for doing so, this being a sort of high-road, I knew not, and had no means of ascertaining; but, at all events, I determined to submit to no delay, if possible. Drawing, therefore, out of my pocket the agreement signed at Akaba, I pointed to the governor's seal, and intimated that I had nothing to do with disputes between the Arabs, but that I must proceed without hindrance, or I should complain at Cairo. The governor replied, that the Tiyâhah insisted on our taking their camels in lieu of those of the Alawin, and that such was the law. To this I rejoined, that it was indifferent to me whose camels I took; but that Muhammed and his men must fulfil their contract, and accompany me to Cairo; finally, if the Tiyâhah camels were not ready in half-an-hour, I would go on with those of the Alawin on my own responsibility: at the same time, I told Muhammed to pay whatever was right between themselves, for which I would advance him sufficient money at Suez. This he promised to do. How I got through

all this, with the few broken words of English and Italian which Komeh could understand, is at the present moment a mystery I cannot myself understand; but the pressure of necessity sharpens one's wits, and developes unsuspected capabilities and resources. Of the tumult that ensued I can give no idea: even if it be about a piastre among Arabs, their gesticulation and clamour is laughably furious; and this was really a case of some importance. I had often amused myself in Cairo in watching the progress of a street-row; but here it was quite different—I was a party concerned; to stop, or even mitigate the uproar was, however, quite impossible. Komeh's blood was up; in vain I seized him by the skirt, and endeavoured to haul him off; he was bent on having the best of the battle, and I was glad to leave him and beat a retreat myself. Without him I was, of course, reduced to dumb show, and now descended to the well, where I found my new guides busy in unloading the Alawin camels—an operation which, for obvious reasons, required a superintending eye, and which was carried on, like all the rest, in the midst of a wordy tempest. It was some time before our new camels arrived; and then, of course, arose a fresh altercation about their respective loads, which promised to be endless, the new sheik giving no eye to the business, but engaged apart in a hot dispute with Muhammed. Again I dragged him off, and insisted on his urging forward the work; meanwhile, I loaded my own dromedary, which proved to be a very inferior one; and, having seen the different burdens apportioned, mounted, and rode off abruptly, in the midst of the uproar. The sound grew fainter and fainter, but ever and anon burst out afresh, "like the last drops of a thunder-shower," till I saw the camels coming on one by one, and Komeh at length overtook me on a trot, his fury, under the blessed influence of the pipe, subsiding fast into his ordinary placidity and good-humour. After all we had not been delayed quite two hours, but two such hours a day would kill anybody. It was a sort of opera scene, to which must be played, for due effect, a continuous accompaniment of kettledrums and trumpets: the Desert seemed preternaturally quiet after it was over.

I found we were still surrounded by our own men, with one or

two of the Tiyâhah, their sheik having remained behind, as I hoped, for good. Striking into the Haj route, we met from time to time with small bodies of Mughreby pilgrims, of the poorer class, hastening to join the main body of the caravan. We continued to advance across the vast gravelly plain, which, with little irregularity, occasionally intersected with small ravines, extends to the foot of the mountains of Er Rahah, and as we proceeded we met with traces of the passage of the caravan, in numerous dead asses and camels, which had evidently died from thirst and exhaustion, their carcases enormously swollen; and the pain of these spectacles was heightened by the reflection, that some poor pilgrims had here lost their only means of proceeding through the terrible Desert, and, equally unable to advance or retreat, were too probably doomed to the same fate as that which had befallen their unfortunate "montures."

It was in the cool of the following morning, (though the mention of it falls in more naturally here,) as, full of satisfaction at the approaching end of our journey, I was walking briskly in advance of the camels, talking with Komeh, when I was struck by the appearance of an object by the side of the path, which gave me an undefinable sensation of heart-sickness; and yet at the moment I could not decide on what it was. It appeared at first rather like the impress of a human body in the sand, than an actual corpse; but on a narrower scrutiny, from which, though shuddering, I could not withhold myself, it proved indeed to be the remains of some one who had there perished. The unhappy wretch had either sunk exhausted as he lay, or perhaps was deposited in his position by another: the former, at the time, struck us as more probable. Only the upper part of the figure remained, the flesh was long since consumed, and some of the bones were missing; but the clothing of the chest and arms still adhered to the skeleton, part bearing marks of being torn by beasts or birds of prey, in the process of getting at the flesh it shrouded; the sand had filled the cavity where once the heart beat out its last pangs, and had matted between and half concealed the bones, so that in a short time these hideous vestiges would be entirely obliterated. Komeh took his pipe from his mouth,

and we endeavoured to make out from the remaining scraps of dress the condition of the unfortunate man: so vague were they that I was quite at a loss; but Komeh, suddenly stooping to the chest, discovered some traces of the embroidered costume of the Egyptian soldiery, and pronounced, and I believe correctly, the unfortunate victim to be one of that wreck of Ibrahim Pasha's army, which, after the last storming of Acre by the English, fled towards Egypt, by different routes through the Desert. The recollection of that terrible retreat, when thousands perished from thirst, famine, and fatigue, is yet fresh in the minds of the Bedouins; the fall of Acre resounded through their Deserts, and impressed an awe and dread of the power of the English which will be long ere it pass away. Here, then, lay the mouldering remains of some poor Fellah from the banks of the Nile, torn from his native fields, and sent in chains to the army of the Egyptian tyrant, to fight battles in which he had no concern, and close a life of slavery in a death of horror, and that to fulfil the ever-shifting policy of another and a distant nation. The spectacle of this poor wretch was little flattering to one's national vanity: to see one of thousands we had been instrumental in thus cutting off, was a very different thing from perusing the brilliant accounts of our successes in the journals.

This evening we halted on the open plain, and by the last light of the sun saw the dromedary of the other sheik, bearing him fleetly towards our little encampment; one or two of his men also accompanied him, swelling our numbers considerably, to our very great annoyance. We had now two factions in the camp, and our progress hence to Suez was one continual brawl: with all the weariness of the Desert, we suffered the worst annoyances of a crowd. The contest began soon after this ill-omened sheik made his appearance. It was I believe a simple question of piastres, the Tiyâhah being anxious to come at a knowledge of what I had paid Muhammed, and to extract a large portion of the spoil; he, a true son of his father Hussein, being equally anxious to prevent both the one and the other of these results. With a view to this, he besought me and also Komeh not to enlighten the sheik, as to what I had paid;

and much as we despised him, we promised, for the sake of peace, to comply with his wish, provided he dealt justly by him, in giving a fair proportion of the money. What this really was, I of course, unskilled in Bedouin law, could not determine, or I should at once have decided the matter, had it been only to save my ears the interminable disputes and discussions that ensued.

Next morning opened with a fresh row between the sheiks, who, instead of loading the camels, began to quarrel about their claims; swords were drawn and flourished, and though in the abstract it little concerned us whose throat was cut, (a consummation of which, however, there is but little dread, Arab valour being equally noisy and prudent,) yet, as our progress was at a stand-still as long as this dispute went on, I proceeded with Komeh to separate the disputants, and had some difficulty in keeping in my intrepid follower; for with no weapons but those which nature had bestowed on him, he would at any moment have readily attacked, and probably well beaten, any two of these fellows, armed to the teeth, and formidable-looking ruffians as they were.

The termination of the vast gravelly plain we had been crossing from Nŭkl was now at hand; but we could yet see it, spreading out wide to our left, the mirage giving its distant portions the appearance of a succession of blue lakes: directly in front were the mountains which close it in; and far to the right we could see, stretching away, a still higher range running to the north, and on the left the tops of the mountains about Wady Ghurundel, the Taset Sudr being conspicuous afar. We entered these mountains by a slight ascent, which struck, soon after, the head of a long, winding valley, descending towards Suez: the immense plain we had traversed floated away in mist, and we had now done with the plateau of the Great Desert, upon which, dreary as it was, and glad as we were to have passed it, I looked back with no small interest.

And here, before we turn away from it, let us sum up in a few words all that appears clearly known as to the course of the wanderings of the Israelites. I have already anticipated, in some general observations on the history of the Exodus, what must so

forcibly strike every traveller, whether a believer in it or not; on the impossibility of so vast a host subsisting by natural means, even for a single week, much less for forty years, in this region. And if we renounce what may appear to some the extravagant and unauthorised supposition of a constant miracle, and endeavour on the contrary, to regard only particular miracles described as exceptions from the ordinary course of things, it would be impossible, in consistency, to receive the history as it now stands at all, and we should be driven either to deny that it had any foundation whatsoever, or to admit, at most, that the body of Jews that quitted Egypt, and after sojourning in the Desert, finally made themselves masters of Palestine, must at least have been comparatively, a mere handful of men. This may be deemed a gratuitous question by many, but in reality it is not so, for the whole narrative must receive its colouring and explanation according as we decide it. If a constant and miraculous supply of food and water was ever ready at hand, to meet the immense wants of two millions, or even many thousands of people, it could little matter in what part of the Desert they halted, or whether they pitched by the few fountains that sprinkled over the wide and thirsty Desert—all reasoning as to their movements, founded on the ordinary nature of things, falls at once to the ground. But leaving this question for others to decide—the first stations of the Israelites correspond with the wells found on the route at the present day, and which have been noticed in the course of the narrative, and their course to Mount Serbal, probably Sinai, has been already traced. From thence they advanced to Kadesh-Barnea, it is said, by Mount Seir, whence we may infer that their course was by El Ain, towards the edge or even down the bed of the Arabah, perhaps by Ezion-Geber, which appears in their list of stations. The position of Kadesh, so important and memorable a point in their history, was on the southern mountainous frontier of Palestine, and in the "uttermost border of Edom," all which Robinson supposes to correspond with the fountain El Weibeh, on the east side of the Arabah, not far from Mount Hor. This, however, is theoretical. The Rev. Mr. Row-

lands has since discovered a place bearing the name, further to the westward, beneath the same mountain frontier, (see Map,) which bends from the Dead Sea to the Wady El Arish, "the River of Egypt," and near the great road which enters Palestine by Muweileh. Here then, in all probability we are to look for the spot whence the Israelites were sent back to wander forty years in the wilderness; and here the sacred narrative abruptly breaks off; nor is there, beyond the enumeration in Numbers of some of their stations alluded to, which appear rather to belong to their *first* than, as commonly supposed, to their *second* journey to Kadesh, any account whatever of their proceedings in this interval, till we find them gathering, at the end of their probation, at the same spot. We can know nothing therefore of their wandering course, except that, as they were unable either to enter into Palestine, or Edom, or the country of the Philistines along the Mediterranean coast, they must of necessity have been thrown back upon the great central Desert, and the regions of Sinai, every part of which, we may infer, they must have visited at different times. Their course after leaving Kadesh is marked, on the contrary, with the utmost clearness: they advanced to Mount Hor, and thence, after being refused a passage through Edom, they proceeded by the Arabah to the Red Sea, and thus "compassed Edom," by gaining the high eastern Desert by way, most probably, of Wady Ithm, or, if this old commercial road was then fortified, by some opening still further south, thus falling eventually upon the territory of the Moabites. In short, their general course cannot well be mistaken, while there is hardly a single point of it that is not, and will not ever be, subject to controversy.

We followed down Wady el Haj, which is stony and dotted with shrubs: numerous quails were running about among the rocks; our Arabs fired several times, and we all pelted with large stones, but without bringing down a single bird; and we had no time to chase them when out of reach. We had this evening a smart shower while encamped, and Komeh was obliged to shelter his cookery with an umbrella.

This morning we, for a time, left Wady Haj; but after crossing

a small plain soon came into it again : here, however, its character is totally changed, the whole region descending hence to Suez being covered with shifting sands, which made our progress excessively toilsome. How delighted was I to see again the long, dark range of Mount Attaka above Suez, with the head of the gulf, and two noble steamers from Bombay lying at anchor ! it was a sight of rapture after my long and weary absence, and by association carried me home at once

We were now anxious, if possible, to arrive at Suez this evening, but found it out of the question. The region of sandy swells and billows, sloping down to the Red Sea, through which we were floundering, all loose in surface, and throwing out an intolerable heat and glare, forbade any progress but at the slowest pace ; and we had besides great difficulty in keeping the direct way. Though the caravan had so recently passed, almost every footprint had been effaced by the sand-storms that had since occurred, and which had completely disguised the track ; and but for the piles of stones which have been erected in different places to indicate it, and some few of which peeped up, we should have been utterly bewildered.

We reached at sunset a part of the gravelly plain, which remained free from the encroachments of the sand, and there encamped. I could well say, as feelingly as Jacob, of these few last days in the Desert, " by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night ;" with the setting sun, a keen blast from the north-west set in, which chilled us all to the bone ; the wind drifted the sand like sleet across the bleak unsheltered plain, piling it up on the windward side of our tents' thin walls : at noon, we were in a burning clime and soil, and by night we had all the sensations of a northern winter. To add to our misery, there was no brushwood, and we all dispersed shivering in quest of a few stray sticks, of which, after diligent research, but two or three handfulls could be collected, scarcely enough to cook our evening meal, and utterly insufficient to warm or even cheer us. Already much shaken by this long peregrination, my health now sank entirely under this sudden change of temperature. I was shuddering with cold all

night, and did not get the chill out of my system for weeks after. Komeh declared his intention of remaining a whole day in the hot bath when he reached Cairo. I expected this night would have finished the old Arab, but he held out like the rest; in the morning we were as blue as a group of spectres.

From hence to Cairo, the direct road lay by the Haj route to the Castle of Ajrud; but in the hope of finding letters at Suez, I diverged from the direct track, and bent my course towards the mounds of the ancient canal at the head of the gulf. The extensive view from the high ground near our tent was waste and desolate, but of great interest. Suez, with the head of the gulf, and the mountain of Attaka—the whole theatre of the miraculous passage—was before us, and we could see far up the valley of the bitter lakes, almost, as it seemed to me, across the Isthmus to the Mediterranean, the far distance floating in an opal-coloured haze. According to the theory of Mr. Sharp, before noticed, the Red Sea, or Gulf of Heroopolis, once extended forty miles up this valley; and, from what I saw of the action of the shifting sands, and their immense accumulation, on particular points, by the north wind, there is much in the physical phenomena of the region to bear out his views. We were this morning clambering up and down sand-hills of recent formation, and twenty feet or more in height, succeeding each other like the rolling swell of the ocean, but they did not at this point extend to the shore of the Red Sea. We reached, before noon, after much puzzling, the mounds of the ancient canal, near their termination on the sands, which have filled up the head of the gulf. The banks are still very plainly discernible, rising a few feet above the level. They may be traced by the eye for some distance to the north. (See Map.)

Diverging for a few hours to Suez, where the Tiyâhah Arabs left us, on the third following morning, we were near the termination of our journey, now protracted to more than six weeks. Our last night in the Desert was glorious: the light of the full moon lay broad and soft upon the sand—soon after midnight we struck our tent for the last time, and then pushed on for Cairo. The moon went down, but the stars yet hovered over the darkened

expanse, then faded into the gradually paling sky; the sun rose as we mounted a gentle acclivity, and the green valley of the Nile, and the countless minarets of Cairo, with the eternal pyramids, burst suddenly upon us, and, with a satisfaction difficult to describe, I hailed the termination of my journey. Thankfully and joyfully we reached again the Bab-en-Nusr, or Gate of Victory, and plunged into the crowds of the capital. Our desert-bred camels were startled at the unwonted scene; they darted off the path at every rencontre, and, after many narrow escapes from being dashed against the overhanging windows by their erratic movements, we dismounted and walked into the Frank quarter, so battered in aspect, so gaunt and sunken in visage, that scarcely any one recognised us. Cairo, after so long an absence, seemed as familiar as Cheapside, and the cry of the Muezzin as welcome as the sound of Bow bells.

And here my narrative should close, but that it may be perhaps as great a relief to the reader as to myself, after so long an absence in the Desert, to walk awhile through the streets of this beautiful oriental capital.

Cairo has always been considered as the *Arabian* city, *par excellence*, in regard to its architecture, and the manners and customs of its inhabitants. Under the energetic government of Mehemet Ali, great changes have taken place, and many practical improvements have undoubtedly been introduced. The streets, which were formerly proverbial for filth, have been purified, and new building regulations adopted, for the purpose of preventing obstruction; mountains of rubbish levelled and converted into gardens; and the sanitary condition of this old hotbed of plague and pestilence much ameliorated. A shrewd shake has also been given, probably without any such design, to that exclusive influence of Mohammedan ideas, by which everything, private or public, was controlled; the wedge of progressive civilization has entered the old structure built upon the Koran, and, whatever may be the full and ultimate effect produced upon the fabric of Mahommedan religion and

social life, the immediate change produced by the efforts of one man —no common one, it is true—is obvious ; Cairo, as a curious spectacle of Eastern life, with its anomalies and contrasts, is by no means so piquant as it used to be ; moral excrescences and peculiarities, under the pressure of new circumstances, having been as much reduced as splendour of costume and external luxury have been abridged.

I well remember the impressions produced on the mind some years back, when the old spectacles were in existence—when different aspects of human degradation and misery, which elsewhere one meets with isolated and wide apart, were here brought together as in a terrible focus—when from the gay streets, full of the joyous tide of daily life, you passed at once, and by a few steps, into the foul dens where the unhappy insane, caged like wild beasts, and ravenous with hunger, were exhibited as a show, in all the fearful variety of their malady, aggravated by the most cruel treatment—and when, shuddering, you emerged from this gloomy receptacle, you were conducted, as to the next "lion," to the slave-market, where a different, and hardly less miserable sight awaited you. In a large court, surrounded with rude cells, basked whole crowds of negro girls, some lying in vacant apathy, sunk to the level of brutes, without their instinctive joyousness, morally blind and dark, and hardly human, with all their faculties undeveloped ; others, whose mere animal gaiety raised them a little higher in the scale ; and some brooding sullenly under the sense of cruel and hopeless wrong : for all, even of this race, are not equally without the deeper feelings of nature. We are no longer shocked with the sight of these horrors. To the influence of European counsellors upon the mind of Mehemet Ali, we may trace the recent abolition of the old madhouse, with its abominations ; a new establishment in the Frank quarter, airy and well-arranged, has succeeded to it ; and, owing to different enactments, the harsher circumstances of slavery are also in a way to be mitigated, and the trade in human beings itself, though not abolished, is yet so much reduced as to have rendered the market unworthy of its former distinction as a Caireen "spectacle."

No one can doubt that the influence of the Pasha's government

has had a tendency to abate, among the higher classes, the exclusive influence of religious fanaticism, so characteristic of the Egyptians, though the stream still runs strong and deep among the common people. The cries in the market, the salutations of friends, the supplications of beggars, the haggling of traders, the song of the boatmen, and even the anacreontic of the rake, have all the same curious infusion of pious sentiment. The invitation to prayer, sounding from the galleries of the innumerable minarets, seems ever to meet the ear, in rambling through the city, like a strain of solemn music, chanted by viewless spirits in the air. Santons and Dervishes, the objects of popular veneration, still abound in the capital of Egypt, though the filthy fanatics described by previous travellers, who went about the streets in a state of nudity, are no longer to be seen ; neither is public decorum shocked by the seductive exhibitions of the Ghawazee, or dancing-girls, once so common in Cairo, but now not to be had for love or money ; though the traveller, while missing this characteristic amusement in the capital, may console himself with the expectation of witnessing it up the country, unless he is curious to see the not only more indecent, but revolting, exhibition, when performed by those of the opposite sex, which is allowed to be substituted by the Moollahs for the genuine spectacle—a true instance, indeed, of "straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel."

During my first day I was completely absorbed and fascinated with the strange novelty of everything I encountered. You step out of your hotel * door, and are surrounded with a host of donkey-boys, who start up from the corners of the streets, rushing at you from all points, thrusting their animals upon your toes, and commending them to you, as at Alexandria, in a Babel chorus of broken English and Italian. I selected for my familiar a slender lad of thirteen, with one of those roguish and merry faces that Murillo alone could do justice to—a precocious imp who, in my various rides, served well enough as a cicerone, and whose odd and original observations, quaintly expressed in broken English, amused me much. Some Englishmen

* I must echo the praises justly bestowed upon Shepherd's.

had taken him up to Thebes, and, by scraping together his earnings, he had bought the spirited little animal upon which I rode, about whose good qualities he did not vaunt without reason; and with the proceeds he supported himself and his mother. The ass of Cairo is strong and spirited, with an upward jerk of the head, and lively eye; he is garnished with gay trappings, and will carry one a mile or two at a gallop, and bear great fatigue: while the pith and endurance of the young drivers are still more remarkable; for in this hot climate they will keep, by the hour, at a run behind you, urging and prodding along their beasts with constant cries, as well over the burning sandy environs of the city as in its cool and shady streets. When mounted, the zeal of your attendant urges you forward at a rapid trot; and in a few moments you plunge into the narrow shady lanes through which the whole population pours along in a state of entanglement and confusion quite alarming to a novice. You are equally puzzled how to avoid injuring, or being injured, in the chance-medley. The camels, with large rolling eye, and slow majestic gait, laden with huge leathern skins, bulging out, and dripping with water, or covered with enormous loads, which extend fairly across the narrow passage, stalk noiselessly along, threatening to sweep you down; and when with a desperate effort you have but just cleared this peril, it is ten to one if you do not find yourself going over some poor blind old woman, bearing a large tray of cakes; but there is no time to wait to offer redress—on you must go, or share her fate yourself, rasping against some, thrusting others against or into the open shops, knocking your knees, perforce, against the side walls, setting your teeth and pulling in your animal desperately at some corner, to avoid running down some file of veiled ladies with their attendant guard; your donkey-boy all the while, deaf to your cries for a more moderate pace, with lungs and stick urges your spirited "monture" through obstacles of all descriptions, shouting, "Rigluk, rigluk! — shimalak, shimalak!" as if the great Pasha himself were coming along. And what adds much to your difficulties, is the melancholy number of blind, or half-blind people you encounter, who unconsciously get

in the way: the proportion of these unhappy persons is very great, what with the subtle penetrating dust, the glare of the climate, the change from a dry to a moist atmosphere at the season of the inundation, and the total neglect of the first symptoms of the malady. When you get a little over the first alarm, you begin to find the scene full of originality and interest. The streets, it is true, are exceedingly narrow, for the sake of coolness, but the houses are infinitely picturesque; lofty and projecting, in the manner of those in our old Gothic towns, story beyond story, till in the more confined alleys, they fairly meet overhead; the brilliant light strikes sharply on some angle of their delicately carved and latticed windows, leaving the street below in grateful shadow; sometimes the rustling fans and glowing bunches of fruit of the date-palm hang trembling over the passage, from within an enclosed garden—or the white minaret of a mosque, with galleries of the most exquisite arabesque tracery, miraculously beautiful, shoots up into the blue with dazzling effect. Then the crowd that pours through these singular alleys is so varied in character and costume. What is more singular than the figure of a Caireen beauty, poised high and riding after the fashion of men upon the up-built pommel of an ass, covered with the richest carpets, and led by an attendant groom in a long blue robe; every observer of taste must agree with Mr. Lane, that her shapeless wrapper of black silk, mysteriously enveloping the whole person, and the white muslin yashmak, or veil, hiding nearly all but the eyes, does but defeat its original intent of masking the beauty that it really heightens, at least to the imagination, by throwing the whole expression into those passionate orbs of liquid black, floating in humid light, and heightened with the artificial dye of henna on the eyebrows and lids, which thrill through you in the soft obscurity of the street, and make you fancy the Arab women the most lovely in the world. Indeed, for this impression, as maliciously suggested by a French lady, they are in no small measure indebted to the friendly veil, that conceals, to use her very words, "la bouche qui est mauvaise, les dents qui sont horribles," though this must, I believe, be regarded only as the detraction of the envious. A long course

through the narrow sinuous alleys at length leads into the bazaars, through which the principal street passes ; but little wider than the others, except in particular places, such as at a fountain, in front of a large mosque, or where there are a considerable number of shops ; it is sometimes covered in with vaulting, and elsewhere with beams and a matting of palm-sticks and reeds ; the sunlight is thus veiled, and the coolness is further increased by watering the earthen roadway. In this central avenue are seen all ranks and classes, with their distinctive costumes, which, though less splendid than those formerly displayed here, are still very rich and varied. The Turkish or Arab grandee, mounted on a Dongola horse, gaily and tastefully caparisoned, preceded by his running Seis, or groom, members of the humbler class of traders, gloomy Copts, Arabs, well dressed Armenians, shabby Jews, Negro slaves, crowds of pedestrians in poor and tattered garb, water and sherbet sellers, venders of cakes and confectionary, files of laden camels, sometimes bearing on their backs hodags containing women and children, with their Bedouin conductors, of wild desert look and simple robe, pass incessantly to and fro ; the light shooting down from above through the interstices of the roofing, catches fitfully on this brilliant and ever-shifting variety of moving colours and fantastic forms. The black costume of the ladies has been already noticed ; it mingles curiously with the rest ; and when we see some fair one, who has dismounted from her ass, and is earnestly conversing with a handsome bearded vendor of shawls or slippers in the half-obscurity of his little shop, we are reminded of the adventures in the Arabian Nights, which are not altogether without a parallel in our own days, if we are to believe those best informed on the subject. Some architectural scenes in this central bazaar are extremely striking ; such, for instance, as the mosque and tomb El Ghoreeh, given in Hay's beautiful work ; and in other places, where the magnificent façade of one of their religious edifices ranges along the street, with its delicate minarets and lofty portal, through which you get glimpses into the cool interior courts, with the worshippers prostrating themselves, or where some fountain projects into the passage, crowded by numerous applicants for the

refreshing beverage, which is sought for with an avidity which would gratify a temperance reformer. Indeed, nothing in oriental cities is a more picturesque object than the Sebeel, or public fountain—a private endowment for the gratuitous supply of water to passengers; * nor can anything be more justly cited as proving the charitable disposition of the inhabitants. These buildings are very numerous in Cairo; and many of the older ones are fine specimens of the Arabian architecture when it was in its characteristic perfection:—the larger generally occupy some angle at the corner of two or more streets, or in some public place; the basement is occupied as the fountain, having openings filled in with railings of delicate tracery, sometimes, like the pious inscriptions which half cover the walls, richly gilt: the lower part of the railing is open enough to admit of the passage of the small cups attached by chains, in which the water is dispensed to all comers; while others bring vessels, which are filled for household purposes. In a climate like that of Egypt, and where, besides, the use of intoxicating drinks is almost unknown, at least, among the many, these establishments are indeed works of mercy, and their foundation displays the brighter side of the moral influences of Mohammedanism: very pleasing it is to see the groups which are constantly replacing one another, mostly consisting of the poorer class of wayfarers, thus provided with so great a necessary. Mr. Lane informs us, that the gratuitous distribution of water is an act of charity frequently performed by the visitors to the tomb of a saint, on the occasion of a religious festival; and the water-carriers, employed for this purpose, are then allowed to replenish their skins at the public fountains, which they invite the passengers in a short chant to partake of freely in the name of God, praying, at the same time, that paradise and pardon may be the lot of the charitable donor. In every part of the East, the erection of fountains was a favourite work of Mussulman piety, and nothing inspires a greater feeling of melancholy in the traveller, as he traces the half-forgotten path through some remote district, than, as he hastens in a burning day to slake his thirst at some small

* Lane.

white fountain by the wayside, to find it ruined and forsaken; the name and memorial of its founder, with his pious quotations from the Koran, declaring its origin and purport, surviving his merciful and useful work. A loud babbling often surprises the passenger from the upper story of the principal fountains: this is often occupied as a public school, in which children are taught at a very trifling expense; but their ordinary education does not go beyond reading the Koran, with occasionally writing and arithmetic.

From the principal street branch off a number of other covered bazaars, devoted to particular departments of traffic. The Turkish clothes bazaar is very tempting to a stranger, with its array of gay gilded-jackets, splendid sashes, and embroidered handkerchiefs. Coffee-shops are to be met with in every part of the bazaars, as well as of the city: there are, according to Mr. Lane, above a thousand of them in Cairo. They are generally small, consisting of a little room, with a front of open wood-work, and an external bench, where passengers may sit and smoke, the interior being provided with others for the same purpose. Coffee is so universal an indulgence in the East, that every nook and corner is furnished with one of these humble shops, from which, however, the coffee has assuredly, to the taste of a genuine amateur, a flavour and relish not obtainable elsewhere: it is served for a very trifling consideration in small cups, and usually without sugar.

Another characteristic figure is the sharp-featured Jew money-changer, established at the corner of some shop, whose red hair and peculiar physiognomy, with the turban and dress of rusty black, would at once distinguish him as one of a different race to the Turkish or Arab Egyptians. The Jews in Cairo, as in other oriental cities, are branded with the popular contempt, but, under the government of Mehemet Ali, enjoy greater protection than elsewhere in the East. Their quarter is horribly gloomy, and characteristic of their degraded and dangerous position; its alleys are so narrow that the upper stories meet, and strong heavy gates at either extremity speak of the perils to which they are exposed at any period of public commotion. The richer, are, as usual, 'Sarafs,'

or money-brokers. We often see one of the humbler sort, plying the immemorial vocation of his tribe, and possibly wealthier than his sordid appearance would warrant one in believing.

In the drapers' shops, the goods are laid away on shelves; but the more attractive articles, such as embroidered handkerchiefs, are slung temptingly from above: on the shop-board in front sits the proprietor, engaged in tailoring, with his pipe by his side, to fill up the intervals of his labour. The shop in Cairo is merely a recess consisting of one or two divisions enclosed with shutters, which are opened in the day; in front is a "mastabah," or small raised platform, covered with a mat, carpet, and cushions, on which the proprietor sits, eats, works, smokes, and takes his noonday nap, or performs his devotions in public. The customer is generally welcomed with pipe and coffee, and the negotiation for an article usually lasts till it is finished, at the least. Another and a very common character at Cairo, is the water-carrier. The supply of Nile water, which is preferable to that obtained at the fountains, is quite a trade; it is brought from the river in skins, on the backs of camels and asses, with whom a rencontre, as before observed, is anything but agreeable; and it is then retailed about the streets. Sherbet and other refreshing drinks are carried about much in the same manner; and its itinerant venders have a characteristic cry, generally of a religious nature.

Elegant gateways give access to the "Wekálehs,"* or, as they are called in Constantinople, "Khans," large square courts, with a single entrance, surrounded with buildings, the lower story of which is appropriated to the reception of merchandise, while the upper serves for lodgings for the proprietor. Of these there are a great number in the city, and the deep gateways which conduct into them from the main street are generally beautiful specimens of Arabian architecture, adding very much to the striking character of the streets; a large chain is slung across the entry, and the heavy portal locked at night. Branching out of the principal bazaars, or "sooks," are numerous smaller ones, very narrow, and, like those in

* Lane.

other oriental cities, appropriated specially to different branches of trade; some all brilliant with heaps of red and yellow slippers, and glittering with gold-foil, and looking-glass. I liked much to wander among these cool and dusky passages, covered in and sunk in a rich gloom of colour, redolent of attar and aromatic and musky scents, each presenting a succession of pictures in character quite Rembrantesque; such as the grave old merchant, dreamily smoking, seated on his carpet, half hidden in the obscurity of his narrow shop, the gleams of light catching on the rich piles of shawls and slippers in which he is half buried; or some lady in her black silk wrapper, gliding mysteriously down the shady avenues. In fact, either to the painter, or to one who can find a pleasure in entering into the peculiar and novel appearances of a totally different mode of life, a promenade in these bazaars, where scenes and incidents of oriental manners, lively, curious, and startlingly picturesque, succeed each other like the confused and rapidly shifting phantasmagoria of a pleasant dream, will be matter of endless interest and amusement.

Let us hasten, however, for a while from the crowded heart of the city up to the height of the citadel, from which we can behold its entire extent stretched out beneath our feet. Away from the main concourse, the narrow streets become wonderfully silent, and almost meeting above, are always in deep shadow; you see not a soul through the gloomy wooden lattices, and were it not for some passenger of whose approach you are unconscious till you nearly run against him round a corner, you might suppose entire quarters were plague-smitten and abandoned: you go on threading these long winding lanes, sometimes coming on some old dilapidated mosque, some exquisite specimen of that peculiar architecture, which for symmetry and fanciful originality, was never surpassed, and which once perished will never be restored; and you look upon it with the melancholy feeling, that it is tottering to final ruin. Emerging at length from these cool though confined alleys into the blazing sunshine, we follow a broad open way leading up to the citadel, which occupies the level space on the top of a pile of

crags, jutting out from Mount Mokattam, of which the yet higher range commands and overlooks it.

A gateway gives entrance to the first court, and passing out of this through a second we come upon a broad terrace, where we may revel in the soft air and bright light of the clime, and enjoy a magnificent view over Cairo and the valley of the Nile. The city lies far below in an irregular semicircle; and a more truly Eastern capital, unaltered by modern innovations, it would be impossible to imagine: it is only here and there we catch the walls; but a perfect forest of minarets springs up in the crowded space they enclose, exhibiting the most curious and fantastic, and for the most part very beautiful, varieties of form. The domes, enriched with oriental devices, are numerous but not large, with the exception of that of the Mosque of Sultan Hassan, which with its lofty minaret and singular porch, forms a noble object, rising above the Roomaylee, an extensive and noisy open space, extending along the foot of the arsenal, which lies just beneath the lofty wall from which we are looking down. Further to the left appears the extensive square court, with a dome in the centre, of the Mosque of Tooloon, the oldest in Cairo; its arcades exhibit an early specimen of the pointed arch, and its minaret, rising from a square base, and having an external staircase, is unique and curious: beside these prominent mosques there are none which, at this distance, present any salient features.

Cairo appears from this point to be exceedingly crowded up with buildings, and the hum of its population comes up from the square beneath, and other densely peopled places; yet extensive portions are but thinly inhabited, and an entire district, "the Boorg e Zifr," is quite forsaken, and mouldering like the tombs in the surrounding cemeteries. The city is about two miles in length by one in breadth, and the population is estimated at about two hundred thousand souls, being here, as throughout Egypt, on the decline.

This immense city, as we are told by Lane and Wilkinson, has been gradually formed. Fostat, on the banks of the Nile, now erroneously called Old Cairo, was the first city founded by the victorious Arabs after their conquest of Egypt from the Byzantine

Emperor; a second, adjacent to it, was added, and became the seat of government; and a third succeeded, under the Tooloon dynasty, in the vicinity of the great mosque of that name already noticed. Thus the tide of population appears to have flowed gradually from the river towards Mount Mokattam, till finally Musr el Kahirah, (corrupted into Cairo,) was founded by Goher, a general of Moez, the first of the Fatemite dynasty in Egypt, who soon after transferred his abode to the new city. The ground of this appellation, el Kahirah, is disputed; some maintaining that it was intended to signify "the victorious;" others the "vexatious," the latter from the planet ascendant at its erection being that of Mars, (el Kahir,) and from an accident that occasioned its foundation at an unpropitious moment. The story, which sounds much like a satire upon the professors of the art, is, that the astrologers, who were watching for a favourable moment, were to have given the signal to the expecting builders, by means of bells suspended to a cord which enclosed the circumference of the walls; but an untoward raven, by alighting briskly on this before the time, and putting the bells in motion, upset all the precautions of the astrologers, by setting the builders to work ere the propitious moment had arrived. Plague, pestilence, and famine might have justified even a more mournful designation.

The eastern part of the city only was first enclosed as far as the "Bab," or Gate Zooayleh; but Saladin strengthened the original wall, and enclosed all the space now included in the city with another, taking in the rock of the citadel. The river formerly bent round from Fostat to the vicinity of the Mosque of Tooloon, passing close under the western outskirts of the city, but the sinking of a large boat in the channel occasioned the formation of an island, the intervening channel was dried up, and the river gradually retired to its present bed, leaving the alluvial plain on which Boulak has subsequently been built. Of these changes the reader may form a general idea by referring to the frontispiece.*

The history of Cairo has not the deep interest, or the remark-

* Wilkinson and Mrs. Poole.

able vicissitudes, of that of Constantinople. It has sustained, with the exception of a fruitless attack by Amaury, the crusading king of Jerusalem, no important siege; in fact, its story is but that of the different intrigues and successive possession of Mussulmen masters, Turkish, Arabian, and Memlook, who have by turns struggled for the possession of this oppressed province or "basest of kingdoms," as it has alternately proved.

Lofty mounds of sand and rubbish rise above the south side of the walls, between which and the parallel and sterile crags of Mokattam, lies a sandy valley, which though so near the city is completely hidden from it. Here, in the midst of a wilderness of others smaller and more modern, extend in long perspective the mouldering, magnificent tombs of the Memlook Sultans; their beautiful domes and slender minarets stretching from the foot of the citadel, along the rear of the city, far towards the distant Desert of Suez, which expands from the very gate of the city to the far eastward horizon. "When we look over these mosques, and minarets, and tombs of the 'great Alcairo,' as Milton calls it, the works of the modern Arabs, in search of the scenes and remains of remote antiquity, the chief object in the landscape, or at least the chief in the mind, are the three pyramids, standing on a raised rocky terrace on the further side of the Nile, and backed by the low hills of the boundless Libyan Desert, dim and faint in the ruddy haze. The river flows north and south through the bright green valley, with its variegated fields and palm-groves, till lost on either side in the horizon; to the south, where it has come from its unknown sources beyond the bounds of Egypt, beyond Nubia, beyond Ethiopia, beyond Meroë, beyond Abyssinia, claiming the worship of the husbandman by its unknown origin, as by its benefits; and to the north, gliding on to the Delta, where it is divided into several streams, and where the worshipper had to inquire of the priest which of them was the Agathodemon, or great God of the country. On this side of the pyramids is the beautiful island of Rhoda, so named from its roses; and nearer still, a dark line on the bank of the river, is seen, among its crowd of boats, the town of Fostat, or Babylon, communicating with the city by the

long aqueduct of Saladin, and one of the five towns, in which, as Isaiah tells us, Hebrew was the language heard in the streets. When the Arabs conquered Egypt, Babylon made a stout resistance to Amrou's forces. The garrison, when routed, crossed over by the bridge of boats to the island of Rhoda; and after this defeat, Egypt was soon lost to the Greeks. A little to the left, between the pyramids and the Nile, is the site of Memphis, once the capital of the kingdom—here lived the kings from whom Moses fled. Further to the left are the pyramids of Abooseer, and then the pyramids of Sakhara, thus fringing the hills in the neighbourhood of the capital with tombs for many miles. On this side of the valley, opposite to Memphis, is the Hill of Toura, the Mons Troicus from which part of the stone was quarried for the pyramids.

"Towards the north, on this side of the river, lies the Heliopolite *Nome*, the Land of Goshen of the Bible. The dark green fields of the valley are divided from the light yellow sands of the Arabian Desert by a well-marked line. Heliopolis, where Moses planned the liberation of his countrymen, where Plato afterwards studied, the seat of early Egyptian learning, is within the limits of the landscape, and the obelisk of Osirtesen is still standing there among the palm-groves of Matarea. In the distance also may be faintly traced the great fork of the Delta, where the river, after having run in one stream for fifteen hundred miles, is first divided. One stream runs by Sais to Canopus, and the other by Bubastis to Pelusium, each however to be divided again into several others. Here were the two deep fords at which the first Ptolemy defended his new kingdom against Perdiccas.

"Across the narrow valley, between this hill and the pyramids, have marched many kings at the head of their armies:—the great Rameses, Pharaoh in pursuit of Moses, Shishank the conqueror of Jerusalem, Alexander the Great, and Cambyses of Persia. This plain has been trod by Herodotus the father of Greek History, Jeremiah when composing his Lamentations, Strabo, Pausanias, and countless old travellers, who have all from the earliest to the present time wondered at the pyramids as they passed; perhaps the

earliest as certainly the largest buildings in the world. No wonder that ignorant persons when looking at them, unable to understand the patience that must have been employed in building them, have supposed that men in those days were of larger stature and of longer lives than ourselves.*"

The interior of the citadel is exceedingly confined; but contains some objects worthy of a visit. The well called Beer Yoosef (Joseph's Well) is a very extraordinary excavation, supposed by Wilkinson to have been originally hewn in the rock by the ancient Egyptians, like the tombs on the hill behind the citadel, and filled with sand at the period when Saladin, who strengthened the city and citadel by the erection of a new wall, discovered and excavated it: others suppose that it owes its original excavation either to Amer or Saladin himself. The descent to it is by an external gallery, and the peep down into its deep dark pit is gloomily impressive, and even awful. It is no trifling work: it consists of two shafts, the upper of which is about one hundred and fifty-five feet, the lower about one hundred and twenty-five, making a total depth of two hundred and eighty feet. The water, which is slightly brackish, filters through, it is supposed, from the Nile: it is raised up by means of a wheel turned by a cow, in a chamber halfway down.

"Joseph's Hall," as it was called, (of which there is a drawing in Hay's beautiful work on Cairo,) has been removed to make way for the new mosque, building by Mehemet Ali, and its columns transferred to this building, which promises when completed to be a conspicuous ornament to the city on a distant view, rather from the remarkable beauty of the alabaster of which it is constructed, than from any beauty of design, the mixed and unmeaning style which prevails in the modern mosques of Constantinople, having succeeded to the genuine Saracenic in this and other modern buildings.

The Pasha's palace is airy and handsome, and the situation is very fine; but if the traveller has seen that at Alexandria, he will find nothing at all novel in the heterogeneous style and bad frescos of its interior.

* Sharpe.

The scene of the massacre of the Memlooks is now much disguised, yet the spot is pointed out where Emin Bey spurred his horse over the parapet. This event will ever cast a sinister interest over the Citadel of Cairo, which is otherwise without historical associations of importance.

I throw together the details as I have read them in different accounts, in which, as might be expected, there are some slight discrepancies.

The Memlooks had been looking forward to the expedition against the Wahabees, for the opportunity of regaining their power and of crushing the Pasha, they had even been incautious enough to allow their intentions to transpire, of which Mehemet Ali had received warning, though he affected to treat the information with indifference. It was now in fact a struggle between them for life or death, and it only remained for the most subtle to outwit his antagonist, and effect that by treachery which could not be attempted by open force. And looking to the barbarism of Eastern governments, the constant use of similar expedients by the Porte, the certain destruction of the Pasha himself if he failed to be beforehand with his adversaries, perhaps his conviction that the improvement of Egypt, as well as the fulfilment of his own ambition, were impossible till this band of political locusts should be exterminated, we cannot doubt that this deed must have appeared to his mind in the light of a stern necessity, and its unrelenting and complete execution to be the fearful die on which his fortunes were at stake.

The investiture of his son Toossoon Pasha, with the command of the above-mentioned expedition, was the pretext for drawing the Memlooks into the snare spread for their destruction. The ceremony was fixed for the 1st of March, 1811.—"That day," said an inhabitant of Cairo to M. Forbin, "the sun rose the colour of blood." The concourse of public officers was great, and the Memlooks, appearing for the last time in all their splendour, encumbered with their rich dresses and finest arms, and mounted on their spirited chargers, repaired to the great court of the citadel. The Pasha, seated among the Turkish chiefs, and attended by some confidential

officers, received them with the usual forms of Eastern courtesy, most lavish when they are intended to mask some sinister intent; it is said that he even summoned unusual vivacity to conceal the mortal anxiety of the hour.

In the meantime, the agents of destruction, the terrible and unscrupulous Arnaoots, whose savage and loathsome appearance must have struck every traveller, were concealed about the walls and towers commanding the descent. The Memlooks, having mounted their horses, descended, and were about to defile through the gates leading down into the city, when to their horror they found them closed, and the keepers missing. Their hopeless position now flashed when too late upon their minds. They turned round to seek some other outlet from above, or to cut their way to the Pasha, but every precaution had been taken against their despair. The work of destruction commenced; an exterminating fire from all sides was poured upon them, man and horse as they raged madly to and fro fell pierced with balls; some, dismounted and on foot, attempted in their despair to find some opening, or some foe whom they might at least die in opposing; others invoked mercy from their inaccessible destroyers, but this even to the youthful Beys, mere lads, was refused; such as were not killed by the balls were dispatched by the Arnaoots, and the cries of the victims were soon hushed in the silence of death. The ruthless work was done, but the Pasha himself had nearly fallen a victim to the spirit of destruction he had invoked; the Arnaoots, bound by no tie to his interests, in the fierce excitement of the moment were ready by another step in blood, to raise themselves and their favourite chieftain, Hassan Pasha, on the ruins of Mehemet Ali himself, whose death they tumultuously demanded, but were restrained by their generous leader at this critical moment. The Pasha, who understood not their words, was alarmed at their manner, and trembling at the storm he had raised, was too glad to divert their ferocity into a distant channel, by issuing an order to slay the remaining Memlooks, and to permit the pillage of their magnificent palaces.

In the morning, as on all occasions of public rejoicing, the

streets had been crowded with the populace, eager to behold the procession. After long suspense it came not; and when at length a few grooms rushed, mute with horror, from the vicinity of the bloody scene, consternation began to seize upon the multitude. Some one exclaimed that Shahin Bey was killed; all dispersed in terror, the shops were closed, the streets deserted, and every one retired to the recesses of his own dwelling to await the issue. Each trembled for himself, for when the spirit of licence and of blood is abroad uncurbed, private animosity, or the mere thirst of plunder, confound with impunity the innocent and the guilty. And thus it proved; for besides the sacking of the splendid houses of the Beys, and the commission of horrible outrages, many, on the plea of their being friends of the proscribed, were involved in the same fate. The city wore on a sudden the aspect of a place taken by storm and given up to pillage.

When time had at length been given to allay the excitement of blood, and to reward the savage agents with unrestrained plunder, to check a further continuance of these disorders, the Pasha on the second day descended from the citadel. Summary measures were now taken with those who persisted in keeping up the pillage, and by degrees the tranquillity of the city was restored.

Orders in the meantime had been sent into the provinces to arrest and put to death the numerous Memlooks scattered about the country; the heads of many were sent to Cairo, and exposed upon the Bab Zowayleh. The most relentless measures were taken, lest "the snake should have been but scotched, not killed;" nothing less than the total extermination of the body became a matter of political necessity. Still about one thousand of them fled into Nubia, closely pursued by Ibrahim Pasha and his troops, who came up with them at dusk. Despair suggested the desperate expedient of swimming the Nile on horseback in the dead of night, at the risk of perishing, with their wives and children before them; they escaped to a man, and gaining at full speed the distant Desert, evaded all pursuit, and effected a retreat into Dongola, but have never since made head again against their ruthless extermi-

nator. Between four and five hundred are supposed to have perished in the citadel and city, and upwards of one thousand in all Egypt, in the course of this sweeping massacre.

One only, Emin Bey, succeeded in effecting his escape from the citadel. He had remarked on his way that a heap of rubbish had accumulated on the outside of the wall; this he recollected, forced his horse to the perilous leap, and escaped unhurt. Some say that the horse was killed; at any rate the Bey got out of the city, and lay concealed till he found means to escape to Constantinople.

The narrow passage, partly cut through the rock, in which this tragedy principally occurred, opens by a noble and very picturesque gateway into the Room-aylee, an open square full of bustle and noise; this great square, above which towers the Mosque of Sultan Hassan, is the gathering-place of public processions. Leaving it on the way to the Frank quarter, we dive again into the long and devious lanes and bazaars; and beautiful it is at sunset to watch the red light dying off the numerous mosques and minarets as we advance through the growing silence of the streets. As night comes on the scene becomes very singular: the streets are forsaken, the gates which divide the different quarters from one another are closed, and but a few passengers are seen flitting to and fro like spectres, provided with loose paper lanterns, alike needful as a guide in the dusky narrow alleys, and as a security against being apprehended by the guard. In nooks and corners of the ruinous buildings, some of the poorer classes lay rolled up in company with the peripatetic dogs of the quarter. The solemn chant of the muezzin, the zughareet, or thrilling cry of the women on occasions of mourning and festivity, break the deep stillness of the city from time to time; or the dark street is suddenly illuminated by the blazing torches of a marriage procession with its strange veiled figures, flashing against the deep carved gateways and overhanging cornices. The city, so to speak, goes soberly to bed at sunset, to awake ere earliest dawn; with the first glow of light on the topmost minarets, the birds are darting to and fro among the palm-groves and about the roofs, and the whole tide of the population, all bril-

liant and glittering in the morning beams, begins to flow again through the streets.

The moonlight nights were glorious, and before I made over the old tent in which I had dwelt for so many weeks in the Desert to my faithful follower Komeh, I remembered a little oasis near the Great Pyramid, where I had a strange fancy to pitch it for the last time.

The necessary preparations made, we set out in the afternoon for the ferry at Ghizeh, somewhat early, as at this season of inundation the distance from the latter place to the pyramids is increased from about five to nearer twenty miles. In about half-an-hour we reached the Nile at Old Cairo. The broad river, reflecting the calm glowing sky, came down in its majestic flow, animated by the constant flitting about of the large white bird-like sails of the numerous boats. The angle of the island of Rhoda with the Nilometer, here divides it into two branches, and the scattered palm-groves of Ghizeh paint their tall stems and graceful fans against the warm transparent sky, opening, as it were, to afford an unequalled view across the rich green level extending to the Libyan Desert and to the pyramids seated in serene grandeur on its rising edge. After much scuffling and haggling among the boatmen for the prize of an extra piastre, we fell into the hands of one of them, rapidly gained the opposite shore, and marshalling in order, took our course along the raised bank of the river, it being necessary at this season, when the inundation had but partially subsided, to follow a circuitous course along the "Gisr" or Dyke, which, as in Holland, affords the only communication from one village to another. Sometimes we turned our backs altogether upon the pyramids, the object of our journey, and after long turnings and windings, they appeared as far or further off than ever. Eager to make more rapid progress, we listened to the delusive representations of one of our boys, who engaged us to descend into the watery level in a bye-path, which after many adventures in the mire, occasioned us only loss of time. The soil of Egypt is either mud or dust, and

sometimes the two together, as in this instance; much there was, however, both amusing and characteristic, in the scenes opened up to us by our devious course. The sower was busy in the half-dried mud, in other places, the earth, after the rich annual deposit of new soil, glowed in the freshest and most vivid green imaginable; while yet the inhabitants of the villages, (which are situated on rising ground above the general level,) bared to the knees, were making their painful way with long trains of buffalos and other animals through the miry pathways, or paddling in rude rafts to gain their isolated habitations. Clouds of birds darting about, were hovering over the half-watery expanse, or settling on the palm-groves; and the acacia avenues were vocal with thousands of invisible songsters which love to haunt their close and fragrant foliage. At different bridges over the dyke fishermen had established themselves, to take advantage of the current for fixing their nets; the dyke itself, with the passage of flocks of horsemen and pedestrians, presented a moving picture, the whole possessing a charm not only from its singularity, but also from association; beholding as we do with so little variation, the unique, unchanging phenomena of the ever-renewing fertility of the granary of the ancient world. Meanwhile as we continued to advance hour after hour, directing our course from one village and its groves of palms to another, the pyramids seemed to have gained but little in dimensions, the sun went down into the haze of the Desert, touching their summits with a ruddy glow, and they then stood half-dusky and confounded with the sandy background. As we reached at length the extremity of the inundated land, darkness gathered over the valley, and it then appeared that the donkey bearing the tent had not been able to keep up with the rest, and that I must either wait for its arrival or proceed alone. I preferred the latter; and, leaving Komeh behind, pushed forward toward the place where I had determined to halt for the night.

Deep sand succeeded to the soil of the valley; the way lay along the edge of the Desert hills, a ridge of which was between our path and the pyramids. The moon rose in the east, and cast a tremulous uncertain light over the inundated expanse; a few tapers appeared

afar in the villages, but no sound reached us—even our own footsteps were noiseless in the yielding surface. We strained our eyes through the dark, but could see nothing of Komeh—and shouted, but no voice answered. This solitary neighbourhood, whence the Arab, after pouncing on his prey, may so easily regain the shelter of the wilderness, bears a bad character; many a murder has been committed here; but the sight which burst upon me in turning the angle of the projecting corner of the hills, was such as to absorb all feeling of personal apprehension in an overpowering sense of the sublime. The pyramids were close upon us, like enormous spectres rising in the deep, dark, fathomless sky, faintly illumined by the ascending moon, and the yellow Desert received her oblique rays, and trembled in the growing radiance. I looked round for my halting-place, a dark patch in a hollow among the whitening sands at some distance, revealed the well-remembered palm-trees, and I advanced towards them. I was now seriously uneasy about Komeh: had he missed the way? or, perhaps, fallen into the hands of some prowling Arab? The boy was dispatched to the summit of the old causeway used to convey the stones to the pyramids, from whence he could not fail to see any figure advancing across the sands: on gaining this vantage-ground he shouted repeatedly, but no one answered. At length I lost sight of him also, and was left entirely alone; the donkey was tied to one of the palm-trees, and I sat down by the side of the well beneath in a state of no little perplexity.

I sat long and listened, and watched the edge of the sand where it merged into the dusky valley, for the forms of the attendants, but in vain. Save in the interior of the monument itself, no silence was ever more profound than that which reigned at its base. The light, increasing apace, now illuminated the whole expanse of vision, everything retained a faint tinge of the colour of day, beneath the more spiritual light of the nocturnal luminary, the fans of the solitary palm-trees waved gently and fitfully as the breeze swept past, their leaves glittered in the rays, and in the deep stillness the sound of a ripe date falling from the glowing clusters upon the earth might be distinctly heard. The moon now peered into the mounds

and heaps of the sandy wilderness, and disclosed the mouths of the funereal pits and rock-hewn tombs, which yawn around the foot of the pyramids, and the broken steps and fissures of the mighty piles themselves till they blended mysteriously with the stars. It was a night not made for sleep. A sense of the hoary antiquity of these structures, and of the mystery that hangs over them, the field of death above which they towered in pale unearthly splendour, affected me as I had never been elsewhere in Egypt, and I thanked the fortunate accident that had enabled me to witness undisturbed a scene of such wondrous solemnity. I rose at length and began to climb among the sand-hills, coming suddenly upon the vast and shapeless form of the lonely Sphynx, seated in spectral paleness, at the base of the pyramids, and whitening in the moon-beams, an apparition almost awful. And now at length the confused sound of voices reached me, and ascending a mound I saw the boy running across towards the trees; I hastened down to meet him, and ascertained that Komeh, having missed his way, had proceeded to the place where travellers are accustomed to stop, at the foot of a range of tombs immediately beneath the Great Pyramid. Here a fire having been kindled among much tumult and confusion, he was busily engaged in putting up the tent, the neighbouring Arabs as usual intruding their unwelcome services, seeking to establish some claim to "backshish," and possibly enough for an opportunity of purloining some stray article. By the agency of the sheik we contrived at length to rid ourselves of these noisy and importunate claimants, or at least to banish them to a distance from our tent, and appointed a brace of them to assist us in ascending the pyramid before sunrise on the following morning.

The Fellahs failed not to come at the time appointed, some girls provided with water-bottles followed; we wanted to drive them away, but in the end found their ministrations very desirable. We scrambled up to the base of the Great Pyramid, which stands, as before observed, on the edge of the Desert, resting on a bold ledge of rock a hundred feet above the level of the valley of the Nile. After all, it is not till one stands at the very foot of this mountain of stone, that

the full impression of its colossal magnitude can be realized; and a nervous person is a little disposed to flinch from his resolution as he looks up to its countless layers of masonry, which tower in sharp perspective till hardly distinguishable at the apex. He can hardly reach to the top of the first layer; and without the assistance of the Arabs, it requires some resolution to begin the clamber. These fellows, however, to the manner born, are infinitely dexterous and encouraging; your foot on the knee of one, and your hand pulled up by the other, you spring on the first tier, and soon find yourself rapidly surmounting the apparently endless succession of steps. The north-east angle is the spot selected as the easiest: here the action of time and tempest has somewhat abraded the stone-work, and produced holes and cracks, of which you take advantage to plant the foot; the guides know every one of these; and in the more difficult places, springing up above you, haul you up to their own level. Notwithstanding, as you proceed, and gain a position from which the height above and the height below are at once visible you are seized with a somewhat uncomfortable giddiness, which might be dangerous to an unassisted adventurer if at all nervous, although the ledges are sufficiently broad to assure entire safety. It is a singular feeling with which you look down from this height of solid stone upon the ocean of sand below, which the incessant action of the winds of ages has piled up against its base and dashed against its sides, from which it falls back like the spray of the waves from some lofty cliff. Your ideas and sensations seem to expand as you advance, to something commensurate with the sublimity and vastness and strangeness of the scene; and hackneyed as the feat may be, no one, unless bent on assuming the nil admirari which some modern travellers affect, ever stood without a feeling of inward elevation on the small area which crowns this most stupendous of the works of man's hand. As I sat down on the edge of the platform, and looked down its giant sides, not a sound was to be heard but that of the throbbing pulsation of the brain. Comparatively cool as it was, a draught of water was never more acceptable than after the violent exertion of the ascent. The dawn was reflected

in the half-inundated valley with singular effect; the isolated villages among their groves of palm, began to give signs of life; and as the sun rose, its beams glittered in the watery expanse, upon the minarets of Cairo, and the craggy heights of its citadel. But the most striking object in the range of prospect was the neighbouring pyramid, casting an immense shadow over half the boundless Libyan Desert, in which whole armies have perished,—far outstretched to the west, arid and blanched, its shifting surface tossed like the sea into long swells and crested ridges of sand, and like that unstable element, slumbering in its might, to awake under the power of the winds into tempestuous and terrible action. The broad valley, with its verdant and immemorial fertility thus renewed before our eyes by the inundation, comes up to the borders of this wilderness, which advances not beyond the ancient bounds of its desolate empire; and no contrast was ever more striking than that thus afforded by the green level, and its smiling fields and benignant waters, with the great desert through which the Nile flows for more than three thousand miles.

Along the sandy skirt of the desert, and but just elevated above the rich valley of the Nile, extending to the southward at intervals of miles apart, are the pyramids of Sakhara and Dashoor, like ghosts of the past brooding over the site of vanished Memphis. Looking at the glorious wrecks which Thebes has left behind after successive visitations, it is matter of astonishment that this no less celebrated capital of Lower Egypt should have utterly perished, leaving no vestige of its past greatness, and scarcely anything to mark where it once stood, but these gigantic pyramids, and the cemeteries and mummy-pits around them which tell of the labour of myriads, some confused mounds, and the beautiful statue of Rameses the Second, broken and prostrate, (of the head of which there is a cast in the British Museum.) The very site has been vehemently disputed, some placing it on the plains of Ghizeh beneath the Great Pyramid, while Mitrahenny, some miles further south, is now generally admitted to be the centre of the city, though its suburbs probably extended to Ghizeh. About twelve miles above, Herodotus

says that the Nile was diverted by Menes from its old course under the rocky edge of the Desert, into its present channel. This complete obliteration of Memphis is the more remarkable, as it appears to have survived as a city to a later period than Thebes. It has been swept from the rich plain here lying outspread before us, and its materials have served to build the Arab cities of Fostat and Cairo, on the other side of the Nile.

The sages of the old world, Pythagoras, and Plato, and Herodotus, have gazed with wonder on the pyramids, as the nameless traveller of modern times, and speculated as to their origin and purport. The hieroglyphic discoveries of Colonel Vyse have attested the names of their founders as recorded by Herodotus and Manetho; but still obscurity hangs over their entire object, though there can be little doubt that they were devoted to sepulchral uses. According to Herodotus, 100,000 men toiled at their construction for more than twenty years. His statements are received with caution by modern travellers; and his affirmation, that a canal was cut from the Nile to introduce water under the Great Pyramid, is rejected by Wilkinson, as contrary both to probability and the physical phenomena of the region. The Great Pyramid was built by Cheops, Chofo, or Suphis, a king of Memphis.

Of its enormous size, a familiar illustration has been given, by stating that its base occupies an area about equal to that of Lincoln's-inn Fields. It has been calculated that it originally occupied an area equal to 588,939·595 superficial feet, or almost 13½ English acres, the side of the square being 767·424 feet, the original perpendicular height of the structure was 479 feet, and the total contents of solid masonry equal to 85,000,000 cubic feet, some say 89,418,806. The present perpendicular height is 450·9. There is some slight variation in the different measurements, but these are cited merely to give some idea of the immensity of the pile. The greater part of the stone was quarried from the neighbourhood, but the finer description brought from Toura, on the opposite side of the river. The external surface was formerly quite smooth, the space between the layers of masonry being filled

up. It must not be supposed that the construction of the pyramids is at all rude, for nothing is more strikingly indicative of the highest constructive skill, than the beauty of the casing throughout the structure, the joints of the stones being hardly perceptible. The size of some of the blocks of the external layers is not less than twenty-seven feet long by nine high. These details will serve to bring home to the reader's imagination the astonishing character of the work. Herodotus states that it was reared by the labour of an oppressed people; and some have even supposed that the Israelites may have toiled at its construction, under their cruel Egyptian taskmasters; * but the more cautious antiquaries renounce this idea. The date of the erection is somewhat conjectural, depending altogether on a correct settling of the chronology of the succession of Egyptian monarchy, which is yet undecided. Wilkinson supposes it may be 2120 B. C.

The Pyramids stand, as it were, on that remote point in the records of the world, behind which the origin and early progress of our race recede into mysterious darkness. The first rays of historical light, rising from the night of time, beam faintly upon their hoary summits, and looking back, we seek in vain to trace the long and gradual developement of that civilization which must have reached so high a degree ere monuments so wonderful could have been reared. Time, who has been finely figured as reclining "demi-somnous" on a pyramid, has forgotten his early course, and the entire records of the world, obscure and doubtful as they are, date from a period subsequent to the days of Cheops. If the scholar who strives by long poring over the written monuments of ancient Egypt to pierce into the secrets of early time, should ever be successful, it will probably be from an investigation of the pyramids and the surrounding tombs, which may contain data that will enable him to trace the doubtful path of history a few paces backward into the still receding gloom.

Of the second pyramid, the height is not much inferior to that of Cheops, but the base is not so large, and it is every way inferior to

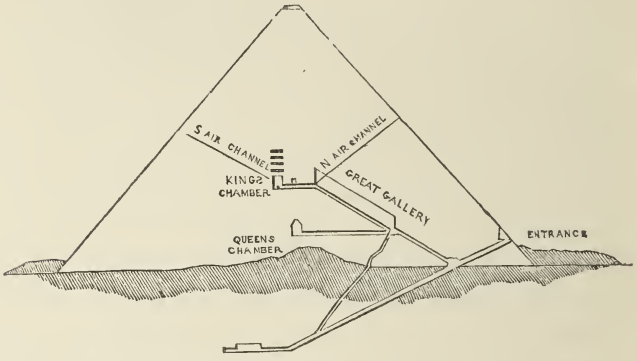
* Lord Lindsay.

this, which towers sublime in size and style, above its numerous fellows of Ghizeh, Sakhara, and Dashoor. The ascent to the summit of the second pyramid is a dangerous feat, from the circumstance of a part of the external casing being yet perfect, and from its rising to an apex. The interior is less remarkable than that of the first; the principal chamber contains some Arabic inscriptions which prove that this, like the Great Pyramid, was opened in the time of the Caliphs, though it is supposed that this was not the first time they had been entered, in spite of the precaution of the builders. The third pyramid, opened by Colonel Vyse, is that of Mycerinus, its founder, whose mummy case, with the hieroglyphic name, is in the British Museum, as well as a body, which, as supposed by some, belonged to it, though this question is warmly debated. It would be curious if its claims to identity could be established. Of Cheops, at least, as Byron says, "not a pinch of dust remains."

But it was time to descend from this aërial platform. The pleasure of having gratified a long-cherished wish, of having vanquished an obstacle, the sublimity of the scene around, and, perhaps, the finer air one breathes at this elevation above the marshy valley, contributed to produce a feeling of exhilaration almost dangerous—I despised the assistance of the Arabs, and began the descent by leaping from block to block in a manner perfectly reckless. Rapidly however as I dashed down, the Arabs contrived to precede me; but I rejected their proffered hands, and with a moment's halt to gather breath, resumed my headlong course towards the base. The steps are amply broad enough for security, provided you do not topple over; for nothing can then save you from the miserable fate of the poor Indian officer, who went bounding from top to bottom like a ball till the life was beaten out of him. But one rarely hears of an accident. The Arabs are equal to anything, neither are they particularly nice. The most unwieldy subjects, male and female, are, by their exertions, worked up fore and aftwise as if by a windlass.

I now directed my course along the layer of stones that leads to the entrance, which is about forty feet from the ground. Leaving part of my clothing with Komeh, who, without ceremony, dashed into

the midst of the Fellahs with his stick and routed them, and having been in repeatedly, preferred remaining outside to prevent others than my two guides from entering, I crouched down at the entrance of the low passage, four feet high, and began the sloping descent into the



bowels of the monument. Holes have been made to assist the footing, but they have become so polished by the feet of visitors and Arabs that they rather cause one to slip ; the dust, moreover, raised by yourself and attendants, fills the narrow passage, and with the closeness of the place and the heat of the candles, produces a very uncomfortable and stifling sensation. This first passage continues on a slope, down to a subterranean room ; but when you have traced it for about 106 feet, you perceive the end of a block of granite which closes it ; an upper passage ascends from this point at an angle of 27°, which being once concealed, those who forced the way were compelled to turn it, and climb by a few steps into the second passage, by which you ascend to the entrance of the great gallery. From hence a horizontal passage leads into what is called the Queen's Chamber, which is small and roofed by long blocks, resting against each other, and forming an angle : its height to this point is about twenty feet. There is a niche in the east end, where the Arabs have broken the stones in search for treasure ; and Sir. G. Wilkinson thinks that " if the pit where the king's body was deposited does exist in any of these rooms, it should be looked for beneath

this niche." He remarks, besides, that this chamber stands under the apex of the pyramid. At the base of the great gallery, to which we now return, is the mouth of the well which we shall presently notice. The long ascending slope of the great gallery, terminating in darkness, six feet wide, is formed by successive courses of masonry overlaying each other, and thus narrowing the passage towards the top—the dim light of the candles is faintly reflected back from the polished walls ; and if you pause a moment, the oppressive silence in the heart of this mysterious monument inspires the deepest awe, not devoid of vague, sinister fancies, groundless as they may be, lest any accident should block one up for ever in the hollow of the gloomy mausoleum.

Advancing 158 feet up this impressive avenue, we come to a horizontal passage, where four granite portcullises, descending through grooves, once opposed additional obstacles to the rash curiosity or avarice which might tempt any to invade the eternal silence of the sepulchral chamber, which they besides concealed ; but the cunning of the spoiler has been there of old, the device was vain, and you are now enabled to enter this, the principal apartment in the pyramid, and called the King's Chamber, entirely constructed of red granite, as is also the sarcophagus, the lid and contents of which had been removed. This is entirely plain, and without hieroglyphics, the more singular, as it seems to be ascertained that they were then in use. The sarcophagus rests upon an enormous granite block, which may, as suggested by Mrs. Poole, in her minute account of the interior, have been placed to mark the entrance to a deep vault or pit beneath. Indeed the mysteries of this vast sepulchre, with all the persevering research that has been made, are far from being solved. It has been calculated, that 3,700 chambers might be hidden within the stupendous mass. Before we left this room," says Mr. St. John, "we fired a small pistol, the sound of which seemed louder than that of a cannon, almost rent the drum of the ear, and went on rolling through the pyramid, as if multiplied by a thousand echoes. The interior of these structures doubtless contains innumerable undiscovered passages and chambers; and, as I listened to the sound, it seemed to sink or mount from cavity to cavity, to

rebound repeatedly from obstructing walls, to divide, to be multiplied, and at length to die away in distant vaults. If this was fancy, it produced at the time all the effect of reality ; and I am not sorry to find that this idea has occurred to others, and that subsequently researches have proved its correctness." There are some small holes in the walls of the chamber, the purpose of which was for ventilation, as at length discovered by Colonel Howard Vyse.

Above the King's Chamber, and only to be reached by a narrow passage, ascending at the south-east corner of the great gallery, having notches in which pieces of wood were formerly inserted, and from the top of that along another passage, is the small chamber discovered by Mr. Davison; its height is only three feet six inches ; above it are four other similar niches, discovered by Colonel Howard Vyse, the topmost of which is angular. Wilkinson supposes that the sole purpose of these chambers is to relieve the pressure on the King's Chamber, and here was discovered the cartouche, containing the name of the founder, Suphis, identical with that upon the tablets in Wady Maghara already described.

Such is the sum of what has been already discovered in the Great Pyramid, with the exception of what, before alluded to, is called the well—an angular passage, like a chimney, sometimes perpendicular, and elsewhere sloping, which descends deep into the heart of the rock, which formed the nucleus round which the pyramid was reared. Few travellers explore its recesses. Mr. Davison, who was the first to describe it, had great difficulty to get any of his Arabs to assist, from their superstitious terrors :—there were spirits below, they averred, from which he would never escape, and that a Frank who had ventured half down, had the cord snatched from his hand by some demon ; and when at length he prevailed on one of them to come down after him, he was in such a state of agitation he did not know what he was doing ; when he reached the bottom, he was more like a spectre than a man : pale and trembling, he cast furtive glances on every side. His hair, if he had had any, would have stood upright on his head. He, Mr. Davison, descended lower

and lower into the bowels of the earth, putting his feet into the niches that had been made on either side, without perceiving any signs of a termination to this horrible place. At length he reached the bottom. "I had here only two things to fear: first, that the bats should fly against my candle and extinguish it; and, second, that the great stone, of which I have spoken, at the entrance of the great well, and upon which the Arab was obliged to lean his whole weight, should fall forward and shut me down where I was, for ever." As he ascended the candle fell and left them in darkness, "upon which the poor Arab gave himself up for lost. He seized the rope when I attempted to ascend, and protested that he would rather I should blow his brains out than be left down in company with the efreets. I accordingly allowed him to mount first, for which he seemed very grateful. Although it is more difficult to ascend than to descend, I don't know how it was, but he got up a hundred times quicker than he came down."

The meaning of this long passage, however, was not made out till M. Caviglia accidentally discovered that it communicated with a large unfinished chamber excavated in the live rock, below the base of the pyramid, to which the passage by which the structure is entered forms a direct descent of 306 feet. From this room the passage is still carried on a short distance, and abruptly terminates. Colonel Howard Vyse excavated still lower, in search of the canal fed by a channel from the Nile, spoken of by Herodotus as surrounding the tomb of the founder, but without discovering anything. Who knows whether after all there may not be some ground for the assertion of the historian, and whether some fortunate discoverer may not yet verify his extraordinary statements?

On emerging from the pyramid the sun was getting high, and glaring fiercely upon the dreary waste of sand. As I paced slowly round the base, some light clouds flitting through the bright heavens, trailed their passing shadows over the enormous weatherbeaten pile, as over the face of a hoary sterile mountain. It was glorious indeed; but the sense of the sublime produced by so unparalleled a result of human labour was dashed by the reflection, involuntarily excited, of

the long-continued toil required to rear it,—by the sad, the humbling idea, which stood palpably embodied before me, that so large a portion of mankind have ever been the passive slaves of despotism: and I rejoiced to think that my lot was cast in days when liberty and utility are likely to become more and more the conditions and the reward of human labour. I passed quite round the pyramid, among the tombs which yawn around, open or half-buried by the sand of the surrounding Desert. Of these many contain curious records of that early day—as the names of ancient kings, Cheops, or Suphis, among the rest. And here, again, we have the same cartouche as at Wady Maghara. One of these tombs in particular has an inventory of

the wealth of its owner—"835 oxen, 220 cows, with their young, 2,234 he-goats, 760 asses, and 974 rams." Further researches have with great reason been made among these ancient tombs, by Dr. Lepsius, which will probably throw light upon that remote period. A very interesting tomb is that discovered by Colonel Vyse, and called after the Consul-general, Campbell's Tomb, which contains a very early specimen of the arch, of the time of Psamaticus II., 600 B.C., which together with one at Sakhara, of the same period, are the oldest known specimens, though Wilkinson supposes that the ancient Egyptians were acquainted with it long before.

At a short distance, cut out of the rocky ledge on which tower the stupendous pyramids, half-buried among the heaving sand-heaps, is the vast mutilated image of the Sphynx, regarded formerly, it is supposed by some, as the tutelary god of the neighbourhood. The features are so defaced, and indeed half obliterated, that much controversy has arisen as to their true character and expression, Denon supposing the face to be intended for that of a Negro, which, in some respects it somewhat seems to resemble, particularly when seen in profile. On more careful examination, it would appear to be moulded on the same type as other Egyptian colossi, having the same massive square outline and features, full eye, heavy lips. Notwithstanding the almost entire destruction of the features, when in strong relief under certain lights, the face pre-

sents a character of serene benevolent repose, and then appears to be

> "Not that fierce sphynx that Thebes erewhile laid waste,
> But great Latona's servant, mild and bland,"

as it is designated by an ex-voto inscription, translated by Dr. Young. The cap which formerly adorned the head is gone, but a portion of the ornament hangs on each side of the face. It was formerly buried to the neck ; but its full size and signification were first ascertained by the labours of M. Caviglia, at the expense of Colonel Vyse. When after Sisyphus-like toil, (the loose surface from above repeatedly sliding into the excavation,) the sand was at length removed, it presented a colossal sphynx, with an altar between the projecting paws, fifty feet in advance ; and a sanctuary, composed of three tablets, one attached to the breast, with a lion in a couchant posture, looking towards the image ; the figure of Thotmes IV., performing sacrifices to a small representation of the colossus.* On the side-walls were also similar representations of Rameses the Great. Steps formerly led down into the area, which is now half-filled again with the sand, so that but a portion of one of the above-mentioned tablets, with a winged globe, is seen above the surface—the imagination must supply the rest of this stupendous and unique monument.

I returned to my tent at noon, more than ever impressed with the pyramids and the surrounding region. Perhaps this might in some measure be attributed to the favourable circumstances under which I visited them. Travellers are often so annoyed by the clamorous presence of the Arabs, that they cannot fully realize the grandeur of the scene. There is much in cultivating first impressions, in viewing objects of interest,—especially after they have become common sights,—when they assume the finest aspect ; and so should the pyramids be seen, even at some little expense of time and management. I am induced to make this remark, as it has been of late a fashion with travellers to speak lightly of a visit to them as a hackneyed affair, and attended with so many vexatious trivialities, that it is rather ridiculous than sublime.

* Wilkinson.

These sketches are now brought to a termination. The author need hardly say that his object has been to present pictures, and to give distinct impressions, of localities, rather than to enter into speculations either theological or political, which such scenes are calculated to awaken. Even in his humble walk he cannot flatter himself that he shall be successful; yet he hopes that any attempt to add to the sum of previous acquisitions will be viewed with indulgence by those who take an interest in the subjects of his narrative.

THE END.

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